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Who is man and what does she say about language? : an analysis of student and instructor discourse about nonsexist language

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"WHO IS MAN AND WHAT DOES SHE SAY ABOUT LANGUAGE?": AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR DISCOURSE ABOUT NONSEXIST LANGUAGE

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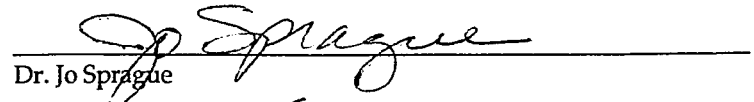

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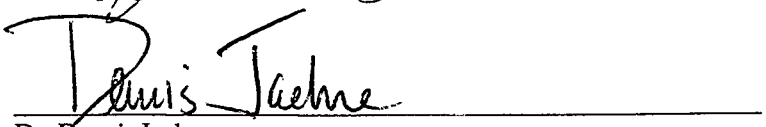

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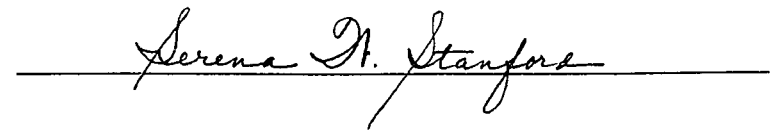

ABSTRACT

"WHO IS MAN AND WHAT DOES SHE SAY ABOUT LANGUAGE?":
AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR DISCOURSE
ABOUT NONSEXIST LANGUAGE

by Tasha J. Souza

We all operate from an implicit theory of language that organizes our views about language and meaning. Although it is logical to assume that such theories would affect language use, their influence on people's views about and use of sexist language has never been researched. The purpose of this study was to examine student and instructor discourse to discover theories people have about language in general, sexist language in particular. The study took a thematic approach and found thirty-four themes and several assumptions about language and pedagogy. The responses centered around two different implicit theories of language—language is a system of signs that we create and use and language is an evolving system of signs that creates us. Students and instructors seemed to agree generally that education is needed about language reform and that promoting language reform would be more effective if it were done without imposing rules.

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I have never known anyone who can explain complex material better than Shawn Spano. Moreover, I have never known anyone get so excited over theory! After taking my first communication course from you, I knew that I not only wanted to be a communication studies major, but that I wanted to have the same passion for learning and teaching as you. Thank you for inspiring me to do my best.

I feel privileged to have Jo Sprague as a role model. I am not exaggerating when I say that Jo has literally made me the person I am proud to be today—the teacher, the scholar, the thinker, and let's not forget, the writer. You have planted all of those seeds and I cannot wait to someday, grow to be the role model and mentor to someone else that you have been to me. You have given me so much more of you than I could ever ask for, and for this, I will be eternally grateful.

I will forever be indebted to my parents. My Mother gave me the strength and understanding I have needed to get through this and many

other challenges. My Father gave me my meticulous nature and the expectations to rise up and meet. Thank you both for your support. I love you from the bottom of my heart.

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Finally, I find it necessary to thank one other person. In doing this thesis, I have learned to say no to many functions and activities that I would have otherwise never missed. I have also learned how hard I work and how hard I can be on myself. Because I am deserving of some gratitude, this "pat on the back" is for me.

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CHAPTER I

Statement of the Problem and Review of the Literature

Introduction

"How can we recognize the shackles that tradition has placed upon us? For if we recognize them, we are also able to break them."

-Franz Boas

Sexist practices have reflected our past cultural beliefs that certain rights and responsibilities belong to, or exclude, one sex or another. Sexist attitudes have been woven throughout the fabric of society demonstrated as Lather (1981) puts it by "male authority figures dominating religion, politics, and the world of work; marriage traditions where a wife subsumes her own identity in that of her husband; and the very language we conceptualize in, using 'he' as the generic, all inclusive pronoun" (p. 37). Some of the sexist attitudes have changed because social, political, educational, and professional opportunities have expanded and exposed the practices noted above. However, because our culture permeates our language system, sexist terminology still exists.

Although the use of sexist language is justified differently now, grammarians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries justified the establishment of their language practice of using "man"-linked words and masculine generics by claiming that God created males to be the "superior" and "most worthy" of the two sexes (Diamond, 1990). Sorrells (1983) states that "Existing communication patterns arose in a patriarchal culture that defines males as the norm and females as less than the norm" (p. 2). Even though most would agree that seeing "males as norm" is less prevalent today,

the language we still use is not so innocent. Peterson (1992) claims that sexist language "functions as a disabling constraint on women to the extent that language--as an institution--trivializes, insults, and excludes women in ways it does not trivialize, insult, or exclude men" (p. 3).

In teaching public speaking classes, I have encouraged students to be aware of the power of language. I have eagerly provided handouts that discuss the nature of nonsexist language and why it should be used. Nevertheless, some students chose to openly refuse or ignore language reform. I was quite surprised at first; I could not comprehend their lack of cooperation. My surprise became discomfort when I found in the literature that the general level of attention and sensitivity to language, by both students and instructors, has been reported to be inadequate (Ivy, Bullis-Moore, Norvell, & Backlund, 1993).

The lack of student cooperation stimulated my curiosity which led to some preliminary research about language in general. To understand how language is used is to understand what is central to the complicated business of living life as a human being. Each of us operates from an implicit theory of language that organizes our views about language and reality. The basic components that make up an implicit language theory are opinions about the definition of language, the learning of language, the making of meaning through language and how language is used.

Because of our implicit language theory, we all have opinions in regard to sexist language and reasons for our beliefs about such language. In addition, we also have assumptions about the causal effects language can or cannot have. Yet, researchers often fail to listen closely to people's language

in use to understand people's choices in their use of sexist and nonsexist language and have never noted the connection between one's implicit language theory and their use of sexist language. The present study is directed to try to get inside those rarely stated theories people have about language. It focuses on the shaping forces of language and how theories of language are linked to one's perception of sexist language. In particular, this study is committed to taking a closer look at how instructors and students talk about sexist language in order to discover their implicit language theories. I elicited metatalk about these topics through interviews, and used the method of discourse analysis to interpret it. Specifically, the study took a thematic approach to discovering implicit theories of language in general, and nonsexist language in particular. The remainder of this chapter reviews three bodies of literature that have contributed to the conceptualization of this study and the framework for research. The sections that follow will cover previous arguments and research about sexist and nonsexist language, literature about language in the classroom and a sampling of the literature on language theory in general.

Sexist and Nonsexist Language

Sexist language can be defined as any language that expresses stereotyped attitudes and expectations, or that assumes the inherent superiority of one sex over the other (Miller & Swift, 1991). Words such as "policeman," "postman," "fireman" and "salesman" are defined as sexist because they refer to men, exclusively, rather than both women and men. "Generic" pronouns such as "he," "him," "his," and "himself," and the "generic" use of the word "man" are also charged with being androcentric.

Among other terms regarded as sexist are terms like "lady doctor" that suggests all doctors are male unless specifically marked otherwise and the term "girl" when used to refer to female adults because an adult man is seldom referred to as a "boy."

Language Reform

Many people assume that linguistic reform began with the women's liberation movement of the 1970s, when in reality it has been taking place for centuries. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, English grammarians borrowed the "worthiness" of genders from Latin to justify using the masculine nouns and pronouns to include both sexes (Baron, 1986). In recognizing the unsuitability of such usage, other grammarians of the same time period proposed "thon" and "heer" instead of the generic "he" (Rovano, 1991). Attempts have also been made to eliminate feminine markings for English nouns like "giantess" and "chairwoman" since the early 1800s. In 1855, William Cullen Bryant, the editor of *The New York Evening Post*, banished the use of "authoress" and "poetess" claiming that these words "were not just superfluous words but 'philological absurdities' because they are fabricated on the false assumption that their primaries indicate *men*" (Baron, 1986, p. 129-30).

Women's explicit awareness of the relationship between language and sexism dates back at least to Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1898), who criticized the use of "he," "his," and "man" in the Bible. Although feminists have been addressing the issue of sexist language for almost a century, it has not been until the past twenty years that we have seen a considerable number of studies by social scientists about sexism in language and other topics dealing

with the relationship of gender and language use. Partly in response to such studies, publishers have established a series of formal guidelines warning authors to exercise care in their word choices (American Psychological Association, 1975; Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1976).

Research Supporting Language Reform

Several empirical studies have lent substantial support to the recommendations proffered in the publishing guidelines (Cole, Hill & Dayley, 1983; Dayhoff, 1983; Murdock & Forsyth, 1985). For example, MacKay (1980) conducted a series of studies on the generic "he" and found that a high percentage of students read "he" to mean only males. A similar study by Stericker (1981) asked undergraduates to read and respond to job descriptions referring to job holder(s) either as "he," "he or she," or "they." Significant results from females supported the notion that the use of masculine pronouns to refer to people in general narrows the reader's attitudes toward the attractiveness of the job in question.

Todd-Mancillas (1981) reviewed empirical studies demonstrating the gender-biased perceptions resulting from the use of third-person-singular masculine pronouns and "man"-linked words (e.g., "mankind"). Neither of these linguistic conventions was found to be associated with equal likelihood of perceptions of female and male referents. In other words, the respondents attributed maleness to the "man"-linked words and the use of the generic pronoun "he" significantly more than they attributed femaleness. Schneider and Hacker (1973) asked a group of college students to select pictures for illustrating a sociology text with such chapter titles as "Political Man" and "Urban Man" (all using "man" in a supposedly generic way) and found that

in 64% of the responses, both male and female students responded to the word "man" with male images only. In the same study, the researchers asked another group of students to illustrate the chapters titled "Political Behavior" and "Urban Life." Although the two groups were given the same pictures to choose from, the group assigned to use the gender-neutral titles provided a balanced depiction of male and female characters. Summarizing her review of these and similar studies that deal with the impact of gender labels, Shepelak (1977) states, "The literature has shown that (1) gender cues serve as semantic markers which identify the sex of the person referenced in the linguistic structure and (2) those semantic markers function pragmatically by determining sex role classifications, possibilities, and preferences" (p. 14).

Scholarly Arguments on Language Reform

Moulton, Robinson, and Elias (1978) make a strong claim that "he," "his" and "man" can:

> fail as genuine gender-neutral terms and that a male term used as a gender-neutral term leads one to assume that a male is referred to even in explicitly gender-neutral contexts. Thus, linguistic form can be the cause of sexism as well as the reverse. (p. 1033)

Using language that seemingly creates masculine images in the mind would appear to maintain and promote the masculine dominance in our culture. While sexist language has been linked conceptually to sexist behavior by various authors (e.g., Blaubergs, 1978; Bodine, 1975), controversy remains over whether sexist language can, in fact, affect social behavior (Briere & Lanktree, 1983). There are two very different positions concerning language change. Advocates of the first position argue that social change creates language change and not the opposite (Cole, Hill & Dayley, 1983). Lakoff (1973) agrees that the generic "he" does refer more to men than to women,

but maintains that to change the language would be useless and may be fairly trivial. Similarly, Cameron (1985) claims that people have two different assumptions about sexist language: sexist language is a *symptom* of women's oppression or sexist language *causes* women's oppression. She argues that because language is a symptom and not a cause, language change does not raise consciousness and works only as a "cosmetic measure" which fails to do justice in reducing women's oppression.

On the other hand, the second position views language as both a symptom and a cause of women's oppression. Miller and Swift (1976) quote a spokesperson for the National Organization of Women, Wilma Scott Heide:

> when changes are effected, the language sooner or later reflects the change. Our approach is different. Instead of passively noting the change, we are changing patterns to actively effect the changes, a significant part of which is the conceptual tool of thought, our language. (p. xi)

Cameron (1985) argues that although nonsexist language may effect the changes noted above, it can also be used to camouflage sexism. For example, when a speaker uses the term "businessperson" to refer to women and "businessman" to refer to men, the word "person" functions as a euphemism for females. Peterson (1992) believes that however well-intentioned, such language "remains a 'biased, discriminatory, or demeaning' choice which responsible language users should avoid" (p. 5).

In addition to camouflaging sexism with euphemisms, sexist statements can be camouflaged by avoiding sexist words. Many critics believe that meaning does not reside in a particular word, such as "girl," but in the way words work together in discourse (Peterson, 1992). Cameron (1985) notes that "in the mouths of sexists, language can always be sexist" (p. 90). Morris

(1988) argues that language reform attempts are doomed because they espouse a "politics of subverting isolated signs, not discourses" (p. 31). Therefore, a person may change his or her isolated words from sexist to nonsexist, but state a sentence that is sexist because of the way the words are strung together. For example, a person could say "Can the female chairperson make some refreshments for us?"

Objections to Reform

Another large body of scholarly research has addressed the general public's objections to language reform. Regardless of the research findings that sexist language is biased toward men, reform of language has received much resistance. For some people, accepting change is difficult—especially if the change involves a practice they have accepted for most of their lives. Because language is often seen an expression of social and cultural identity, resistance to its change seems inevitable.

The reasons for people resisting language reform from sexist to nonsexist language are many. Reform is met with both general conservatism deploring anything which might besmirch the "purity" of the language and specific resistance to the idea that women are badly treated in English (Frank & Anshen, 1983). Other criticisms of reform range from statements that the matter is too trivial for feminists to be wasting their time on to accusations of censorship (Frank & Anshen, 1983). Peterson (1992) identified two seemingly contradictory positions that have been taken on the topic. He stated that "Over the past decade, such language change efforts have been criticized on the one hand as being misguided and superficial, on the other hand, as totalitarian and a threat to freedom of speech" (p. 2). Some argue that sexism

in the language merely reflects social reality (Randall, 1985). After all, most congressmen are men, so the word "congressmen" is correct for gender most of the time.

Diamond (1990) compiled a list of "Top Ten Objections to Eliminating Sexist Language" in order to address objections categorically and lessen the resistance to abandoning the old masculine-generic practices. Several of the objections have previously been touched upon, but a few need to be detailed further. One objection is that advocates of change want to get rid of all words with M-A-N in them. Ridicule is often used by making fun of such proposed forms as "personfacture," "personicure" and "girlcott." Diamond's response is that this argument is more humorous than factual. It is the use of "man" and other masculine generics that people disapprove of, not the combination of the letters M-A-N. Advocates of language change believe terms like "spokesman" should be replaced by "spokesperson" to avoid giving the impression that this position (and others) is primarily or exclusively the domain of males. "Just because M-A-N appears in a word does not mean it is used as a generic term" (Diamond, 1990, p. 9).

The most common objection that I have witnessed is that changing our language practices is difficult or awkward. Diamond responds to this position by claiming that once a familiarity with the available alternatives has been established, bias can be easily removed from our language without forcing us to change radically the way we speak or write. There are several available options and alternatives already in practice.

Another objection to language change mentioned previously is that people feel that their rights to free speech are being infringed upon. Diamond

(1990) states that these people "appear to believe that the effort is designed to dictate the content of their verbal and written comments rather than the form" (p. 14). Advocates for change are more concerned with how people say things than what they say. Clear, bias-free language is a standard similar to other, equally arbitrary, rules of grammar.

In sum, language change has been called silly, irrational, unnatural, and simplistic. Frank and Anshen (1983) believe that such criticism stems from the dominant group trying to reaffirm its social identity in the face of a threat. Resistance to nonsexist language may be a resistance to the new world view it presents. Whatever the case, resistance to language reform is prevalent and the reasons for resistance are still not fully understood.

Language in the Classroom

Another major body of literature that informs the present study takes the more general question of sexist language and relates it to the more specific arena of education. Ivy and her colleagues (1993) state that many studies about nonsexist language have been driven by instructors' observations of perpetual sexist language in college students' written work and oral communication. However, controversy exists over the role educators should play in language reform. Although there have been numerous empirical studies on sexist language, most of the scholarship about language in the classroom consists of critical essays by instructors who are reflecting on their experiences. The following section will look at four major lines of research: language learning and meaning, sexist language in the classroom, the educator's role, and methods educators have used.

Language Learning and Meaning

Looking at children's language learning procedures is especially important for educators. Before examining the types of language children use, a survey of language acquisition theories should be reviewed. In order to explain language acquisition, theorists have developed several ways to interpret learning, four of which I will cover: behaviorist approaches, structuralist approaches, the semantics and cognition hypothesis, and functionalist theory.

The behaviorist approach views learning as a fairly simple process. Many people believed that children learned to talk by imitating others (Naremore & Hopper, 1990). Adults shaped this talk, or children's language, by correcting the child's mistakes. B.F. Skinner, and other behaviorists, provided this description with scientific respectability. The behaviorists "hold that learning occurs when a child's behavior results in some behavior from the environment or some reaction within the child that is reinforcing" (Naremore & Hopper, 1990, p. 138). Positive reinforcement of behavior increases the probability that that behavior will occur again in a similar situation. Behaviorists view the mind as a set of input/output functions foreordained with dispositions to respond in certain ways to certain stimuli (Devitt & Sterelny, 1989). "The child is dependent on the actions of others in the environment for her learning" (Naremore & Hopper, 1990, p. 139).

Where the behaviorist approach suggests that the language learning child is a passive participant in the learning process, the structuralist views the child as an active participant. The theory of transformational grammar, developed by Noam Chomsky, shifted the focus from the process of language

acquisition to the product of language learning (Naremore & Hopper, 1990). The structuralists have been concerned with language universals and those aspects of language that can be shown to be invariant and transcultural, and therefore, not concerned with individual or social idiosyncrasies. The structural linguist takes a formalistic approach in looking at language (Chomsky, 1965). Children need to learn linguistic rules of structure in order to acquire linguistic competence. Wood (1981) states that according to this approach, children acquire meanings in a feature-by-feature fashion. For example, children learn the feature of adding "s" to make a word plural and can then apply the rule to words that they have not yet heard.

Because the acquisition of grammar is not the only part of children's language acquisition, language researchers pointed out the importance of meaning (semantics) and cognition. The semantics and cognition hypothesis coincides with Jean Piaget's cognitive psychology. This approach leads to ideas that children learn grammar as a means to represent what they already know about events in the world (Naremore & Hopper, 1990).

The most recent of the four approaches surveyed here is the functionalist theory. Naremore and Hopper (1990) state that the key to this view is the notion that no grammatical structure can be understood outside the context of the language use. The functionalist recoils at the thought of language separated from social use (Ellis, 1992). They "maintain that language cannot be separated from a community of users, and that 'organized diversity' is more important than the search for linguistic universals" (Ellis, 1992, p. 2). The structure of grammar is discovered through children's experience with its use in various communication contexts. Wood (1981)

states that "children learning how to mean are really learning how to function within their system" (p. 150).

Children's meaning from a functional viewpoint reveals the several driving forces behind children's struggle to learn how to mean. Halliday (1982) describes children's development and use of language in regard to function. These functions are instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and representational. Halliday (1982) defines these as follows: the instrumental function is used for satisfaction of material needs, the regulatory function is the language in control of the behavior, the interactional function is that of getting along with others, the personal function is the expression of identity, the heuristic function is the use of language to explore and learn, the imaginative is the function whereby reality is created, and the representational function is that of the communication of content.

Children not only learn to use language in terms of its function, but learn the language that functions best in their social group.
The development of sociolinguistics has shown systematic correlations between variations in linguistic form and social variables such as the social strata to which the speaker belongs, differences in social setting or occasion, differences in topic, social relationships between participants in linguistic interactions (Fairclough, 1989). Emerson (1986) states that:

> According to Bakhtin, each social group—each class, profession, generation, religion, region—has its own characteristic way of speaking, its own dialect. Each dialect reflects and embodies a set of values and a sense of shared experience. Because no two individuals ever entirely coincide in their experience or belong to precisely the same set of social groups, every act of understanding involves an act of translation and a negotiation of values. (p. 24)

The above language acquisition theories reveal that our knowledge of language learning is always changing. Children may learn language by reinforcement, imitation, modeling, self-motivated practice, and rule induction. While a vast amount of literature exists on children's language acquisition and learning, the research is limited on how adults come to change their language and acquire new usage of language, specifically their use of sexist language.

Research on Sexist Language in the Classroom

There is a growing concern that many students are not receiving instruction in the area of nonsexist language standards and that the students who have are not necessarily adopting these standards. Researchers have discovered that many students have never been exposed to the standards regarding sexist language in other instructional settings, such as high school and other college classes (Ivy, et al., 1993).

Motivated by students' sexist language usage and resistance to instruction in nonsexist forms of language, Ivy and her colleagues (1993) replicated and extended a 1978 study by Martyna of college students' usage of nonsexist language. The results revealed similar findings to those of the earlier study and some troubling indicators in regard to students' experiences (or lack thereof) with nonsexist language instruction in high school and college. The findings led the researchers to negative answers to the questions: Has sexist language usage changed since the 1970s? Is the "word" getting out? Unfortunately, either the "word" is not getting out, or it is being ignored. Researchers (Ivy, et al., 1993) pose the question:

> How can an educator *not* teach students about nonsexist language usage for at least written discourse, given publication standards that

> mandate it, given evidence that sexist language excludes and devalues segments of the population, and given the potential such usage has in limiting visions of opportunity? (p. 10)

Educators' Role

Additional scholarship in the area of language reform in the classroom has sought to answer a number of questions about the educator's role. Many question what the role of educators should be in the broader social movement for language reform. Of all the means for implementing change, should the priority be placed on educators? If so, how should language change be taught? How appropriate is it for educators to impose a certain use of language on students? Can educators really make the difference? Although answers to these questions may never be agreed upon, their implications should be further addressed.

Because speaking a language often seems natural and effortless, many educators and students are not very reflective about it (Ellis, 1993). Little recognition exists that our perception of the world and the shape of our thoughts may be influenced by language. Sprague (1992) states that instructors rarely "look critically at the language of the classroom in terms of the meanings that are created through the nature of discourse" (p. 13). She earlier argued that if the purpose of education goes beyond simply transferring factual information, then instructors should encourage students to pursue their own individual potential and constructively surmount the constraints, including socially prescribed gender roles, that make it difficult for people to actualize their potential (Sprague, 1975). In order to satisfy these functions of education, students and instructors would need to examine and question self-consciously the conditions of their own meaning-making.

The tension that exists, however, is the issue of language use and cultural and personal identity. According to Emerson (1986), Vygotsky claimed that "One makes a self through the words one has learned" (p. 31). Even when teachers are well-intentioned, students may resist language change because they may perceive the teachers as imposing on the student's view of her or himself. Sprague (1993) states that "the politics of curriculum conceal struggles over who gets to shape how we speak" (p. 117). She further contends that teachers should acknowledge the tension between honoring the identity of students and establishing linguistic "competence" within the dominant discourse communities. Lewis (1990) believes that "students struggle to mark themselves off against the dominant discourse of the school through the enactment of practices that reaffirm and validate their subjectivities as specifically classed, raced, and gendered social actors" (p. 471).

Methods Used in the Classroom

Various methods have been used in the classroom to approach the topic of nonsexist language, ranging from modeling to explicitly discussing the problem. Blaubergs (1978) categorized the major modeling suggestions for change according to their rationale as indirect change, change via circumvention and change via emphasis on feminine terms. In the following paragraphs, I will outline the above suggestions, a sample of discussion and class activities previous instructors have used, classroom and university policies, and some consciousness-raising techniques.

Language for change. The proponents of indirect change take a passive stance with language in believing that any forthcoming change must occur first in societal practice. "Thus, the actual implementation of the change is to

wait for or possibly foment change in the society first" (Blaubergs, 1978, p. 246). An instructor using this approach would not model nonsexist language or correct the use of students' sexist language, but may try to avoid using sexist terms. For example, Todd-Mancillas (1981) recommends that "teachers might at least minimize their dependence on masculine generics by adopting the avoidance strategies" (p. 114).

Other instructors believe that to deny the responsibility of language reform is to be part of the problem (Lather, 1981; Randall, 1985). Therefore, many instructors have chosen to take the route of change via circumvention. Change via circumvention takes responsibility for language reform by eliminating gender-specific terms from usage and/or substituting neutral terms. This method suggests taking the gender out of language. An instructor using this approach would use terms such as "chairperson" and would use "he/she" in referring to a person with an unknown gender. In contrast, change via emphasis on feminine terms marks gender wherever possible. This strategy attempts to increase the visibility of females in roles they are in or could be in the future. It is hoped that through continued usage, the negative connotations of feminine gender words would change to positive (Blaubergs, 1978). This approach would include using the generic pronoun "she" and terms such as "chairwoman."

There is some evidence that students can learn to adopt teachers' oral usage of nontraditional generics (Adamsky, 1980; Todd-Mancillas, 1981). Lather quotes Howe as stating, "When teachers change, so does everything in their classroom" (p. 37). Adamsky (1980) conducted a study that indicated students adopted her usage of nontraditional generics. The results of her

study indicated that after Adamsky used the alternative generic "she" throughout the semester of her instruction, the students used "she" in their papers significantly more frequently than control subjects. In addition, the students reported increased sensitivity to social inequities resulting from usage of masculine generics.

Discussion and classroom activities. Beyond modeling the use of non-masculine generics, some instructors engage in discussion activities to bring the issue to the forefront. Wood and Lenze (1991) provide the class with carefully tailored case studies that provide practical examples of language usage for classroom discussion. Rovano (1991) states that "class discussion analyzing when and under what circumstances it may be appropriate to use 'girl' and 'lady' will profit students on many levels" (p. 62). Discussion is the first step in educational diffusion processes and allows for fairness in future decision making about language use in the classroom.

In order to reduce resistance many instructors incorporate class activities to increase student awareness about the implications of using sexist language. Rovano (1991) informs students that "if they use sexist language, it is a linguistic discrimination, and it will cost them either directly or indirectly" (p. 59). She tries to tactfully help students overcome their resistance to the recognition that sexist language is as harmful to men as it is to women. She also asks students to bring sexist language samples to class to brainstorm alternatives to such usage. In order to increase students' awareness of sexist language in speech, she asks students to point out violations when she uses them. Instead of her having to continuously correct the students, they become more conscious of errors and react more

positively when they can correct her.

Language policies. Some instructors and departments require students to avoid using sexist language as a course expectation and incorporate activities to increase the use of nonsexist language. The Department of Speech Communication at the University of Maine has incorporated a nonsexist language policy in its syllabi for basic courses. The university publishes a brochure which provides a brief history of sexist language and gives examples of both sexist language and nonsexist alternatives.

Consciousness-raising techniques. Although it might be possible to use recommended approaches such as rules or policies, Lewis (1990) believes "we cannot artificially construct pedagogical moments in the classroom to serve as moments of transformation toward a critical political perspective" (p. 470). Many educators work to transform the consciousness of their students by helping them develop a critical perspective (Delpit, 1988; Lewis, 1990). Lewis asks students to examine the conditions of their own meaning-making and to use it as the place from which to start to work toward change. Through this process, she maintains that "Individuals can begin to see how social practices are organized to support certain interests" (Lewis, 1990, p. 469). Similarly, Delpit (1988) uses various exercises to help her students understand how arbitrary and politically charged language standards are and to explore aspects of power as exhibited through linguistic forms.

Fairclough (1989) believes that schools are the key arena in which critical language awareness should be addressed. He states that education "is developing the child's critical consciousness of her environment and her critical self-consciousness, and her capacity to contribute to the shaping and

reshaping of her social world" (p. 239). Fairclough (1989) suggests teaching children critical language awareness by using a three-part cycle:

> 1. *Reflecting on experience*: Children are asked to reflect upon their own discourse and their experience of social constraints upon it, and to share their reflections with the class.
> 2. *Systematizing experience*: The teacher shows the children how to express these reflections in a systematic form, giving them the status of 'knowledge'.
> 3. *Explanation*: This knowledge becomes an object of further collective reflection and analysis by the class, and social explanations are sought. (p. 242)

For instance, a teacher might ask students to reflect on the language used in traditional wedding vows. The teacher could then show the children how the use of "man and wife" is a non-parallel construction and a difference that is not logical. This knowledge can be reflected on by having the class discuss the social reasons for that construction. The autonomy of men and women of the past and the present could then be compared.

We have yet to learn more about the effectiveness of the above methods and whether or not they are appropriate. The literature about nonsexist language in the classroom has reviewed some critical essays by instructors who are reflecting on their experiences and has shown that controversy exists over the issue of nonsexist language reform. Unfortunately, there are a limited number of studies about lived experience in the classroom as it is created by the different social actors. Whether inside or outside the classroom, the issue of change in language practices and attitudes should be addressed. In order to understand the underlying theories that people maintain about changing (or not changing) language, a closer look at theories of language is necessary.

Language

Many of the previous arguments for and against language reform tie back to the relationship between language and reality. Language theorists have had to struggle with what language is, how people learn language, and language change. Is language a neutral medium for the transmission of information? Do we shape language or does language shape us? What meanings are created in the classroom when differing types of language are used? Do words we utter arise as a result of our thoughts, or are our thoughts determined by the linguistic systems we have been taught? These questions have remained unanswered for centuries. Yet, in an attempt to answer these and other questions a large number of language theories have been developed that reflect these tensions. Because of the vast amount of literature about language available, a comprehensive review of language theory is beyond the scope of this thesis. The literature falls generally into the six categories discussed below.

Six Language Approaches

There have been numerous classifications of and approaches to language generated and applied over the past two centuries. Some classification of approaches to language analysis is necessary in order to clarify the differences and tensions between the positions. One useful schema is offered by Grossberg (1979) who outlines six views of language and meaning arrayed on a two-dimensional matrix. For the purpose of this study, I will adopt his classifications of meaning and language in order to organize the conceptual issues and frame the different approaches. One dimension is "subjectivity" versus "objectivity." The other dimension provides three

general ways to understand language as referential, systemic, or processual. The six views of language are created by cross cutting these two dimensions: subjective and objective referential views, subjective and objective systemic views, subjective and objective processual views. In the section that follows I will define and discuss each of these views along with the theories that complement them.

Referential views of language and meaning. A referential theorist views language as a collection of discrete signs, each of which has its own proper reference (concept, sense) and referent (object). This position views language according to its function and claims language exists as a factual and independent entity. Meaning is given through language insofar as people know the rules that enable them to see that to which the sign points. Because language is void of intrinsic meaning apart from the language user's consciousness, language must be viewed as a container which remains separable from the meaning/information it brings us.

The distinction between subjective and objective views in the general referential conception is the question of whether the reference or the referent is the primary source of meaning. Although both orientations see meaning as an entity referred to in some immediate and direct fashion by linguistic signs, they differ on the degree to which consciousness is considered the meaning's necessary locus (Grossberg, 1979). "Both positions tend to think of meaning as information—as a representation of some objective conditions—and to assume methodologically that this information is to be discovered within language itself" (Grossberg, 1979, p. 194). In other words, it is the language itself which carries the meaning to us.

Both referential views consider language as an instrument people use, and the meaningfulness of language resides in its reference to some collection of entities (either subjective mental entities or objective external entities). The objective referential position denies the existence of any realm of mental entities. It is the reference to observable events, behaviors, and objects which constitutes the dominant notion of meaning. Meaning is a given property of the world discovered by people. For example, the use of the word "man" has referred to solely the male gender and to both genders when speaking of humankind. Within the objective referential view, the meaning of humans comes from the humans themselves and not the word chosen to identify them, whether it is "man" or "human." When a person sees a human, although the word "man" has referred to the human, it is the human that gives us the meaning. Therefore, language is simply a tool of transmitting information.

On the other hand, in the subjective referential view the sign refers to a mental entity located in the consciousness of the individual language users (Grossberg, 1979). This approach views people as the architects of meaning, and meaning as the property of consciousness. According to Hayakawa (1972) linguists within the general semantics movement have demonstrated that "meanings" do not reside in words, rather meanings reside in people. "We do not 'get' meaning from things, we assign meaning" (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 99). Further, meaning exists prior to its expression in language and meanings themselves exist within a private consciousness. However, this notion of privacy cannot be taken to extreme, for then the possibility of shared meaning is hindered. This position parallels with

semantics, or the study of meaning. Lyons (1981) defines the accepted theory of semantics as ideas or concepts "which can be transferred from the mind of the speaker to the hearer by embodying them, as it were, in the forms of one language or another" (p. 136). Referring back to the example stated previously about the word "man," the meaning of a human in this orientation exists as a mental image. Because "man" has been said to refer to humans, the word "man" can simply conjure up the mental image of humans. Once again, the language is neutral, but it is our individual consciousness that gives the word its meaning.

Systemic views of language and meaning. While referential theories assume the reality of our experience is both of ourselves as consciousness and of the world, systemic views examine the role language itself plays in constituting the meaning of and hence, our experience of both the self and the world (Grossberg, 1979). Postman and Weingartner (1969) argue that language is far from being neutral as the referential view would promote. The systemic view sees language as a productive, emergent, and creative system "rather than a merely passive mediator between people and the world" (Grossberg, 1979, p. 199). Meaning is seen as a property of the linguistic system and therefore, avoids separating consciousness and the world.

The proponents of the two subcategories of the systemic view divide over how to describe the linguistic system. These distinctions are similar to the distinction made by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure argued for the distinction to be made between *langue* and *parole.* He regarded *langue* as a system or code that is prior to actual language use, which is the same for

all members of a language community. "It is the abstract system of relations which make individual behavior possible" (Cameron, 1985, p. 13). *Langue* is the linguistic side of language as opposed to *parole*, which is individual performance (Fairclough, 1989). As particular instances of speech, the individual behavior of *parole* is regulated by *langue*. The systemic views claim that "language may be seen either as a system of quasi-objective elements standing in a particular relationship to one another or as a system of acts of speaking performed by individuals" (Grossberg, 1979, p. 199). On this ground, Grossberg makes the distinction between objective systemic and subjective systemic approaches.

Proponents of the objective systemic approach see language as an atemporal code manifested in its concrete actualizations in language use. In contrast to the referential approach that emphasizes the individual sign, the objective systemic approach emphasizes the relationship among them. Meaning is seen as the epiphenomenal consequence of interactions of the elements constituting language as *langue*. This conceptualization of meaning can be understood by examining the system of signs. Postman and Weingartner (1969) state that "the meaning we assign is a function of the pattern of system of symbols through which we order and relate whatever it is we are dealing with" (p. 99). Within this system, the signifier and signified are linked only by virtue of their location within the system. "The sign is constituted as a socially fixed relation of equivalence between a particular material signifier and its signified" (Grossberg, 1979, p. 200). It is only within such a system that this relationship of signification is possible. Reality remains unintelligible prior to the intervention and mediation of the

symbolic system. The structure of our understanding of ourselves and the world is determined by the structure of the language system itself.

The structuralist approach mentioned earlier follows this objective systemic philosophy. Devitt and Sterelny (1989) state that within structuralism, there are no pre-existing ideas before the appearance of language. Our thought is shaped by our language. Therefore, objects remain unintelligible until we have a signifier to refer to them given to us by our language community.

Bowers (1987) claims that this approach is a restatement of Benjamin Whorf's insight that "the epistemological code inherent in language organizes the sense of meaning in terms of pre-established categories and rules of association acquired as the person becomes a member of the language community" (p. 5). For example, before I formally address a female, I search through my pre-established categories from my community of female forms of address. The categories of Mrs. and Miss organize the meaning of her identity by her marital status. Furthermore, if a female introduced herself with Ms., I would notice her refusal to categorize herself by marital status. Once again, this usage creates another marking or category for her identity. Yet, I do not do the same when addressing a male in a formal situation with the word "Mr." His marital status goes unnoticed by the linguistic representation.

Within the objective systemic view it is difficult to account for historical change and individual creativity because the code is static. On the other hand, subjective systemic views begin with the primacy of speech. Meanings emerge from the system of language use, speech acts, or symbolic

interactions. Grossberg (1979) claims that "the meaning of a sign or action is publicly available and identifiable as the role it plays in the context of the natural human world of interactions in situations" (p. 204). Language is seen as action, as doing something. Lyons (1981) asserted that this view of language was originated by Wittgenstein who emphasized the association between words and their use. This approach is also similar to the key insight of Searle's work cited in Fairclough (1989) on "speech acts" as it has come to be applied to communication. Fairclough (1989) stated that when a person is characterizing part of a text as a speech act, one is characterizing what the signifier "is doing by virtue of producing it—making a statement, making a promise, threatening, warning, asking a question, giving an order and so on" (p. 156).

Paulo Freire insists that language is at the center of our knowledge of ourselves and of others (Berlin, 1991). He believes that it is a social construction and a constantly changing set of formations whose meanings emerge as people engage in written and spoken dialogue with each other (Berlin, 1991). In acknowledging cultural effects on language, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is typically cited (Briere & Lanktree, 1983). The hypothesis argues that one's language can determine thought processes (Davis, 1993, p. 218). As Sapir (1949) argued:

> The fact of the matter is the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are different worlds, not the same world with different labels attached. (p. 162)

Because within the systemic approach language is seen as a system of

conventions defining and dictating standardized usage, it has a constraining power over individuals. Therefore, language change can play a role in this approach. The use of the generic "man" can be seen as a speech act that functions to exclude women. The change from the generic "man" to a more inclusive word, such as "humankind," can act to include both genders.

Process views of language and meaning. The systemic views just discussed have challenged the more traditional referential theories dominating social and literary theory (Grossberg, 1979). Although both versions of the systemic view have compelled theorists to acknowledge the reflexivity of the social world, the final two views in Grossberg's approaches bring the reflexive process a step further. The proponents of the processual views argue that the fundamental structure of human experience is an ongoing process of the constitution of meaning within which subject *and* object are constituted. These orientations acknowledge a unity, a non-differentiation of subject and object in the process of signification preceding their separation.

The subjective processual view reiterates the position of systemic subjective views but goes beyond it by describing the particular relation between language and transcendental consciousness (Grossberg, 1979). This approach attempts to problematize the world in its relation to the subject and to describe the structures of consciousness which make meaningful experience possible. The most general characterization of the subjective processual view involves the redefinition of experience in terms of the process of intentionality, which is the constantly repeated conjunction of people and the world (Grossberg, 1979). Intentionality is the locus of

experience and meaning, and is pre-explicit. In other words, it exists outside of our own everyday awareness. Meanings are not in the mind, they are dependent upon the processes of transcendental consciousness. Humans are both the creators and users of language. Therefore, the objectivity of the language is rooted in the subjective acts of the speaker. "Just as language use constitutes the speaking subject, it is also responsible for the possibility of our having and referring to a world" (Grossberg, 1979, p. 211). For example, if I hear the word "congressmen" all of my life, I will think of political leaders only as men. Therefore, when it is time to choose political leaders, I will turn to men. The language can create and perpetuate history.

The objective processual view is the most radical of views because it rejects the notion of a source or origin of meaning. Instead, it is assumed that all reality is a process constitutive of the meaningfulness and structure of experience. Grossberg (1979) states that "Our existence is a moment in a process in which the very structure of our participation (and hence, our identity as a participant) is produced or determined" (p. 216). This view does not look for "meaning" of a text (assuming that there exists some stable and unified set of signifieds hidden below the surface of the signifiers) because language and language use cannot be separated. Language defines the space in which we live; it is a web of connotations that represent the most available trace of the process of contextualization through which our existence moves and in which it is constituted (Grossberg, 1979). Therefore, we can create and re-create gender expectations through our language use and communication in the moment.

Whether or not reality is linguistically determined, "the human

species—and no other—possesses the one essential tool which makes a social construction of reality possible" (Grace, 1987, p. 3). That tool is language. Parain (1971) maintains that "we are a kind of compost heap on which language germinates, grows, and flowers" (Parain, 1971, p. 113). We can create it (the compost heap), but, it also creates us. "While language indeed serves as a means of control and domination, it can also serve as an instrument of liberation and growth" (Berlin, 1991, p. 170). It is for this very reason that the use of nonsexist language seems so important. "If language perpetuates attitudes, then language can change attitudes" (Margulis, 1975, p. 122).

It should be evident through reviewing these language approaches, that there is no true or false theory of language. We can choose the way to look at it, or the lens, that is the most useful or helpful for certain purposes. The question and underlying tension that remains is whether it is more analytically valuable to believe that language and society exist together or separately. Many scholars find it more productive in research to view them as separate. However, for centuries philosophers, philologists, sociolinguists, and others concerned about language have argued for the mutual existence of language and thought and have maintained that language may actually shape an individual's perception of the world (Stericker, 1981).

This brings forth another ongoing controversy about the causal relationship between language and social reality that reflects back to the more specific argument that other scholars have made about sexist language mentioned earlier. Some writers on the subject of language reform that come from the referential view have claimed that language merely reflects societal practices (Lakoff, 1973). Blaubergs (1978) states that "Indirect change involves

the idea that language is a reflection of society and, since planned language change is ill-advised, any forthcoming change must first occur in societal practices" (p. 245). Others argue from the processual viewpoint that language patterns and cultural norms develop together and continually influence each other (Dayhoff, 1983). Therefore, if language not only reflects but helps maintain society, "changing the usage and structure of language constitutes at least a first step toward changing societal practices" (Blaubergs, 1978, p. 245).

A Framework for Research

The average person may not enter into the vocabulary of the scholarly frameworks that are addressed in the above literature review of language approaches, but when people argue over the issue of language reform, they are having essentially the same arguments as the language theorists. All people have a theory of language, whether they know it or not. Theories provide order to our everyday experiences of the world. "To theorize is to respond to meaningful questions with tentative answers" (Anderson & Ross, 1994, p. 29). Individuals have espoused theories, which are explicit and can be articulated, and theories-in-use, which can be implicit, but influence behavior nonetheless (Menges & Rando, 1989). Anderson and Ross (1994) asserted that how we perceive the world is theory-dependent. "We literally can't perceive meaningfully without bringing previously learned generalizations to bear on new circumstances" (Anderson & Ross, 1994, p. 30).

Because theories influence language behavior, it is important to look at the different theories in use. Most people are unaware of their assumptions about language. Even people who hold strong opinions about particular language practices, such as the use of the generic "he," are often unaware of

their assumptions. Analyzing discourse can help to reveal one's theory of language, whether it is basic or sophisticated. "Some theories may appear simple because of the way they are expressed" (Menges & Rando, 1989, p. 54). But, regardless of sophistication, we are all active theory-makers. Our personal theories help to bring logic and coherence to our thoughts and actions (Menges & Rando, 1989).

As the literature review indicates, previous researchers who have studied nonsexist language have done so by conducting studies that show the impact of language on thought, by recommending guidelines for language use, and by surveying student resistance. Generally, though, they have failed to look at the reasons for the ongoing struggles and lack of acceptance of language reform efforts. Although it is logical to assume that one's theory of language would affect language use, the influence of these implicit language theories on people's views about and use of sexist language has never been researched. Anyone whose goal is to inform and influence others to avoid using words, phrases or expressions must first look at the beliefs and perceptions people have about language.

The goal of this research is to bridge this gap by providing a rich interpretive account of language users' theories of language. Taking a communication perspective on people's language as they talk about nonsexist language may help in identifying their assumptions about language that underlie arguments and influence their beliefs. Learning about the assumptions behind the arguments will shed light on the arguments themselves. Beyond looking at the language used to shape such beliefs and perceptions, a secondary benefit of this research for those seeking to serve as

change agents is that it may bring reasons for resistance to the use of nonsexist language to the surface. Therefore, I propose the following research questions:

I. What thematic clusters are apparent in student and instructor discourse as they talk about the topic of nonsexist language?

II. What assumptions do students and instructors make about the nature of language and its role in shaping and changing society?

III. What pedagogical assumptions do students and instructors make about how language change is taught and learned when discussing the issue of nonsexist language in education?

IV. How do the theories revealed from students' and instructors' discourse about sexist language compare to the more formal theories of language?

CHAPTER II

The Method

Research Design

A qualitative approach is essential for examining the theories of people's informal language because it provides the researcher with a more thorough understanding of language in use and an opportunity to discover how people construct meaning. "Qualitative research begins in our own experience" (Anderson, 1987, p. 254). It is within our own life that we discover that the language use of others is different from our own, and therefore, worthy of study. Anderson (1987) defines qualitative research as directed toward the explanation of social action in order to unpack meanings which constitute the reality of that action.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that qualitative methods are used to uncover and understand what lies behind any discourse or phenomenon about which little is yet known. Discourse analysis has become a common qualitative method in looking at language and meaning. Much (1992) claims that "discourse carries tacit information about individual meaning systems" (p. 52). Van Dijk (1983) states that "Attention has shifted from the study of individual words, phrases, or sentences to an analysis of structures and functions of actual forms of language use, that is, to discourse" (p. 21). Discourse analysis is a very broad term encompassing several research approaches that look at language in use. Coulthard (1985) claims that "discourse analysis should offer us a characterization of how, in the context of negotiation, participants go about the process of interpreting meaning" (p. viii).

There are several different ways in which to conduct the method of discourse analysis. Because I am searching for meaning about language within the language, I narrowed my focus to an interpretive thematic approach, one which uses interviews as the technique to elicit textual information. Thematic analysis of the respondents' discourse obtained in these unstructured interviews enables both explicit and implicit theories of language to emerge. Owen (1984) defines themes as "threads of meaning" woven throughout the discourse (p. 275). Within this framework, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions related to nonsexist language were identified. The themes that emerged helped to understand the differing values that people have relative to: language and sexism, language and education, and language and society.

Respondent-Directed Interviews

Thematic discourse analysis using interviews was chosen as the most appropriate method for this study, given the circumstances. Perhaps an ethnographic study observing and recording naturally occurring discourse about sexist language would be preferable (Peterson, et al., 1993). Despite its value in studying discourse, such an approach could not be used due to time scarcity and privacy issues. A reasonable alternative is discourse elicited during interviews, which is qualitatively more rich than would be answers to a questionnaire. Further, in order to understand how people reason about language, sufficiently open-ended questions allowed their language about nonsexist language to emerge in their own categories, not ones already constructed. This provided sufficient space for other potentially relevant concepts to emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Peterson et al. (1993) state that

"The face-to-face interview provides one of the most powerful methods for understanding how people order and assess the everyday world" (p. 7).

The interview questions were designed to encourage respondents to tell their own stories and express their views and experiences freely. As Argyris and Schön (1974) state "We cannot learn what someone's theories-in-use is simply by asking" (p. 7). Therefore, my goal was to ask questions that would generate a text that would make their implicit language theory clear. In order to refine the questionnaire and find the type of questions that would elicit varied responses, two pilot studies were done with four different participants. The first pilot brought forth a revision of the questionnaire because the questions were quite vague and subsequently produced answers that were too brief. The pilot respondents asked for specific examples and scenarios of sexist language use in the classroom in order to better understand a possible situation. The respondents also thought the questioning sequence should lead the interviewee more slowly to the issue of sexist language in case there was any immediate resistance. Therefore, I changed the description of the research project to "Language Use in the Classroom" instead of "Sexist Language Use in the Classroom" and added three scenarios to the second questionnaire. The first two scenarios had students using masculine generics in classroom dialogue. The third scenario described the nonsexist language policy from the University of Maine and asked the respondents' opinion on such policy. These were designed to discover whether or not the respondents would pick out the use of sexist language by the students in the first two scenarios and whether or not their responses were consistent with their agreement or disagreement with the policy. The sequence of the questions

was also changed to move the respondents from talking about their specific experiences to discussing their beliefs and opinions about nonsexist language and language reform. The second pilot study confirmed the effectiveness of the second questionnaire because the responses received were more elaborated and there were fewer expressions of confusion (see Appendix 1 for interview questions).

Respondents

Six instructors and six undergraduate students, chosen from a convenience sample, were interviewed and asked to comment on their own particular view of nonsexist language and its meaning. The respondents consisted of six females and six males. The group of students was made up of a female Mechanical Engineering major, a female Communication major, a female African American studies major, a male Electrical Engineering major, a male Aviation major, and a male Nursing major. The group of instructors was made up of a female Business Management instructor, a female Women Studies instructor, a female Economics instructor, a male Recreation and Leisure Studies instructor, a male Biology instructor, and a male Economics instructor. Although not by design, the group turned out to be ethnically diverse including three African Americans, two Mexican Americans, and one Filipino. The ethnic make-up of the group was an attempt to capture a cross-section of the campus and consequently somewhat reflects the campus ethnic diversity.

Conducting the Interviews

All interview appointments were set up by telephone contact. I met the respondents at their convenience and personally conducted the

interviews. Interview length depended on the respondent's communication style, sexist language experience, interest, and competing time commitments. As stated above, a relatively unstructured protocol was used in order to capture their own somewhat naturally occurring discourse and to avoid unnecessarily limiting the content brought forth by the respondents. The length of the interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 90 minutes.

The respondents were told that the purpose of the study was to look more closely at language in the classroom. Because they did not know that it was a study about nonsexist language, many of them responded to the content of the scenarios instead of the use of sexist language (as I had speculated might be the case). The interview process allowed individual theories about language to emerge through metatalk. The interview gave respondents the opportunity to expand and explain their assumptions about nonsexist language. When appropriate, probing follow-up questions were asked.

Analysis of Interview Transcripts

Once the audio taped discourse had been collected, I transcribed the data (available upon request). The discourse from the students and instructors produced a fifty page (24,780 words) research text, and a thematic analysis of the text began. The thematic analysis included five steps similar to the steps used by Peterson et al. (1993). These included:

1. Search for individual themes in the transcripts;
2. Develop each of the themes identified in step one;
3. Determine relative significance of themes;
4. Search for groupings and thematic hierarchies;

5. Determine which respondents produced specific data within the categories.

In the preliminary analysis, an open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) process was used by going through each transcription sentence by sentence and idea by idea to mark words, sentences, and phrases relevant to the research questions. The entire text was read several times in order to search for individual themes or meanings in the transcripts. "Analysis of a word, phrase or sentence is an especially valuable exercise because it can teach you how to raise questions about possible meanings, whether assumed or intended, by a speaker" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 81).

After open coding was completed, the concept classification process began. In order to analyze the data, a detailed, line-by-line approach was used, which Strauss and Corbin (1990) characterize as the most detailed and generative type of analysis. In this process the discourse was reduced into units. I was not looking for a grammatical unit; instead I searched for themes within sentences or fragments. Therefore, the unit of analysis in this coding was the unit of significant meaning, or theme, and the surrounding words or sentences that provided the context.

After the themes of sentences or sentence fragments were identified and bracketed with surrounding words or sentences to keep them in context, general clusters of themes were grouped according to their commonalties. I used the constant comparative method of analysis to identify groupings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Themes were compared one against another and a cluster was created for each of those that appeared to pertain to a similar phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each groupings' relative significance

was then analyzed and the clusters were discarded if necessary. Those discarded were the clusters that seemed less tightly knit together or somewhat repetitive. Inductively, I created clusters that suggest units of meaning or themes related to language from the reduced text. After the clusters of themes were identified, working titles were assigned.

I then went through the entire open coding process again using the clusters created. The thematic clusters were compared to identify logical relationships, overarching categories, and hierarchies. Looking at the relationship among the clusters suggested that there were some clusters of clusters. These clusters were then grouped together. In addition, the properties of many of the clusters were broken up into smaller clusters. The final number of clusters I selected to report was thirty-four. Category names were then assigned to the common groupings of clusters. The group of categories consisted of eleven, each containing two or more thematic clusters. Some clusters were not judged to be related to other clusters and were, therefore, grouped under the category of "additional clusters." However, these clusters were of no less importance and in fact, two of the clusters in the "additional clusters" category happened to be the largest of all the clusters.

After the categories were established, I searched for the respondents that gave each of the responses. For each thematic cluster, I tallied the total number of responses per cluster, respondents per cluster, the number of students versus instructors and the number of males versus females. Along with reporting the above information, I selected examples of the thematic cluster results to display. In those examples I underlined the key words that created the theme in each response.

In order to answer the three interpretive research questions, it was necessary to reconstitute and interpret the information. Looking at the clusters, the categories, and the original data the discourse was analyzed and abstracted in relation to each of the remaining research questions. These formed the basis for looking for the students' and instructors' assumptions about the nature of language and about the role of the instructor. The assumptions were stated in the form of propositions and described. The last step in this study was to identify the respondents' implicit language theories revealed from the assumptions, the clusters and the original data. The assumptions about language revealed from students' and instructors' discourse were compared to the more formal theories of language. I linked several of the themes from the student and instructor discourse with the six language approaches discussed in chapter one. From this it became apparent that their discourse centered around two fairly coherent and complete language theories.

CHAPTER III

The Thematic Cluster Results

The first research question asked about the thematic clusters in the student and instructor discourse as they talked about the topic of nonsexist language. Thirty-four clusters were established by a constant comparative method and displayed according to frequency. See Table 1 for the entire list of frequencies. Eleven categories were created by grouping together clusters that centered around similar issues. See Figure 1 for the categories of thematic clusters. The following section will describe and explicate the clusters in the logical categories that I developed rather than according to their frequencies. Although the thematic clusters are in order of frequency within the categories, the categories are in no specific order.

Language as Conscious/Unconscious

The forty statements in this category related somehow to the relationship of language and consciousness. The six thematic clusters in this category include awareness of language, language as habit, language as reinforcer, unconscious of language, conditioning, and conscious-raising as habit.

Awareness of Language (20)

This cluster consisted of twenty comments from ten different respondents (five students and four instructors, four males and five females) that emphasized the need for people to be more aware of the language or of our behavior through language. Thirteen of the comments were made by females and seven by males. Typical comments from this cluster include:

Table 1

Frequency Results of Thematic Clusters

Thematic Clusters	Frequencies
Language Change	22
The Generic "He"	21
Awareness of Language	20
Correcting Language	13
Language Acquisition/Children	12
Language Frames our Thought	11
Affect	11
Sexist Jokes	11
Power and Authority	11
Resistance	10
Language as Silly	9
Language as Habit	9
Language for Inclusion/Exclusion	8
Language and Respect	8
Modeling Nonsexist Language	8
Language as Practical/Suitable for the Times	7
Intent	7
Language as Reinforcer	7
Unconscious of Language	7
Rules to Change Behavior	7
Language Reflects Culture	5
Language as Insensitive/Sensitive	5
Language as Unimportant	5
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Conscious-Raising as Habit	3
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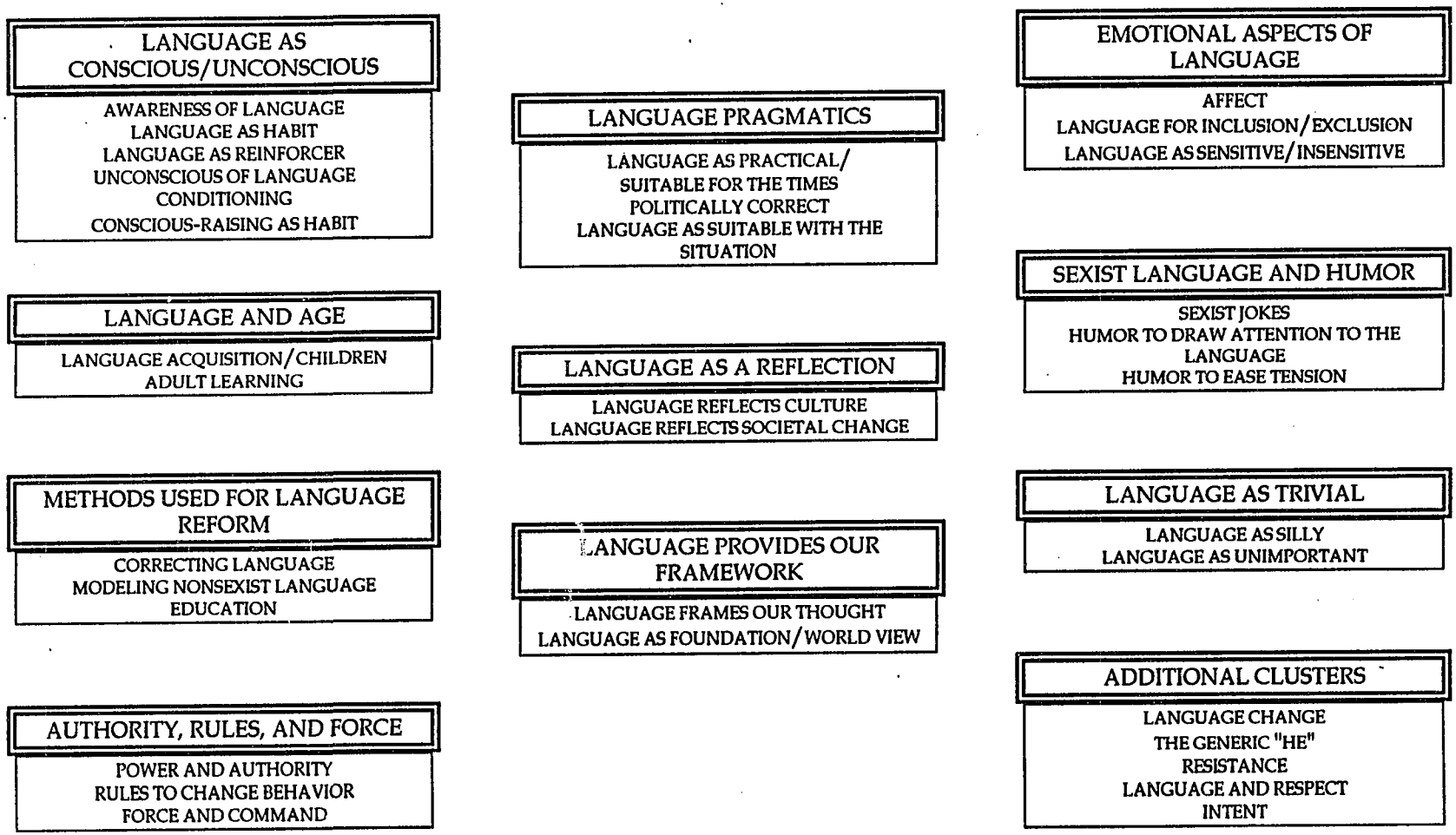

FIGURE 1
CATEGORIES OF THEMATIC CLUSTERS

> In order for people to understand how they are seeing the world, I think they have to be more cognitive of their language.
>
> I try to be aware of what I say, who I say it to . . . if you're conscious of it, it can affect your behavior.
>
> I need to be more aware of it [sexist language] because the more you perpetuate that kind of thought in your speech and even in your writing, the more it will continue to go on with people who are less aware and it just spreads. So, I think everybody needs to be more aware of the type of language that they use.
>
> . . . an awareness of the sexist language, an awareness of the fact that, um, they do cause harm. Being sensitive to that aspect of it, is important in changing it.

Language as Habit (9)

This cluster consisted of nine responses provided by six respondents (equally divided between males and females and students and instructors) that discussed language as a habit that can be learned and therefore, unlearned. Three of the comments came from instructors and six from students. Three came from women and six from men. A sample of comments from this cluster include:

> I've tried to stress like saying "humankind" or "people" instead of "mankind" and so forth. 'Cause it does seem a little unfair. But, its, it doesn't seem worth putting a whole lot of stress into to just 'cause it's just habit. That's how people develop through history.
>
> I think it's [sexist language use] all just ah habit really. Or it's just ingrained in them.
>
> In our society so many sexist things are said and we are taught to learn that way. So, I think everyone is subjected to some learning of that. So, I have to constantly try to unlearn that and not repeat that.

Language as Reinforcer (7)

The responses in this cluster stated that language can reinforce certain

beliefs and that language change could be effected through reinforcement. Five respondents (four instructors and three students, three females and two males) contributed the seven responses that make up this cluster. Five of the responses were from females and two were from males. A few examples of typical comments from this cluster follow:

> Because it [sexist language] reinforces stereotypes and that we need to obviously work at anything possible not to perpetuate those concepts.
>
> . . . if it's [language change] positive reinforcement, if it's something that's implemented gradually. That almost sounds like brainwashing.
>
> But I am still very careful about saying "he or she" to, ah, at least reinforce the impression with my students that it is possible, if not likely, that women will ah rise to top levels of business organizations.
>
> . . . changes in the language that are compatible with changes in circumstances, you know, those will reinforce the change in circumstances. . . . simply by giving it a new name to something, you do not alter the reality.

Unconscious of Language (7)

Five respondents (two instructors and three students, two females and three males) provided seven comments identifying our language use as an unconscious process. Typical comments include:

> People also don't pay attention to what they are saying half the time so it's really difficult. People say things on the slide [sic] where they don't know that they said it or not.
>
> I believe that language is, comes from a very deep and complex part of the mind just like behavior. I believe that you can't pinpoint language in your thoughts, they all exist in your mind. They are not part of conscious control.
>
> I know language can be gender biased and maybe there's a possibility that I have used "he" and I'm not even focusing on it. . . . it's just never been something I've concentrated on.

Conditioning (4)

Three respondents in this cluster provided four responses that stated we are conditioned to use the language we use. Two of the responses were from males and the other two were from one female. All the respondents were students. Representative comments from this category include:

> I think we are trained to learn by repetition and I think we're, since our earliest days, we learn by some teacher talking to us, or our parents talking to us and we hear communication at a younger age than we ever read, read material. . . . I think we are conditioned to learn by the communication we are exposed to.
>
> We are kind of conditioned to use "he" [or] "she," you know, and "he said" or "she said."

Conscious-Raising as Habit (3)

One female instructor was the source for all of the responses in this cluster. Reversing the previous cluster of sexist language as habit, she referred to consciousness-raising as a good habit—one that can be developed. An example of one of her comments follows:

> I have no habit from being a small child learning the language where it automatically systems to question the way in which I see other things presented to me in terms of the language.

Language and Age

The following statements addressed the issue of age in language learning. Many of the respondents were more optimistic about children acquiring the use of nonsexist language than for adults. The clusters from this category are language acquisition/children and adults.

Language Acquisition/Children (12)

Eight people (six males and two females, four students and four

instructors) believed that age made a difference in the learning of language and/or that the language could effect how a child grows up. Four responses were from females and eight responses were from males. A few example comments from this cluster include:

> The language could affect how a child growing up, you know, views opportunities and possibilities that he has.
>
> Saying "fireman" does kind of say something about our society. . . . I've never, I'm not a chauvinist at all. But, I find myself asking myself, 'now is that chauvinistic?'. . . that's a word you grew up to use, you know, when you related to a fireman, woman or man, . . . you said "fireman."
>
> It depends on the age group, you know, if it's children, yes, I think it [language reform] can change attitudes and behavior.
>
> . . . you can reform thinking or views. Especially if you do it at a young age. I think that's the key, is to catch the people early.

Adult Learning (4)

These responses came from four different respondents (two male and two female, three students and one instructor). The comments suggested that the older a person is, the harder it is to change his or her language. A sampling of examples follow:

> I think if it's adults who already have their views of the world and already are sexist or already are extreme in one way or the other, I think it's going to be difficult for language reform to make an effect on them. Because their self concept and their views and their values are already kind of formed as adults.
>
> I think that's the key. Is to catch the people early, way before college, it's hard to break those things once you get to this age.

Methods Used in Language Reform

The following three clusters deal with methods used in support of

language reform of sexist language and whether or not they are appropriate. Both students and instructors discussed correcting sexist language, modeling nonsexist language and education of nonsexist language.

Correcting Language (13)

Respondents from this cluster responded on the importance of correcting sexist language both of oneself and others. Six respondents, four female and two male, provided thirteen comments. Three of the respondents were students and three were instructors. Examples of their comments follow:

> If I make a mistake, I acknowledge the mistake and go back and try to correct it.
>
> In class I tell them that that's the only time that I give myself permission to be what I would consider rude, and stop them or correct their language or help them, perhaps, express it in a different way.
>
> . . . when language that is sexist in nature is stated that I should be there to correct them and remind them that they need to look at doing things that are politically correct.
>
> Sometimes when you correct them [for using sexist language] they kind of pooh pooh it.
>
> Sometimes I slip, and they correct me and it helps me to internalize and say "you're right and I need to be careful of that." And I'm glad they brought it to my attention so that I don't do it outside the class as well. So, what's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Modeling Nonsexist Language (8)

Five respondents, three instructors and two students, provided these eight responses about modeling nonsexist language. Most of the comments discussed the importance of modeling nonsexist language as an instructor. Three respondents were female and two were male. Examples of the

comments follow:

> Even in private conversation with students, I'll, I'll do the same thing [model nonsexist language] 'cause it's one of these things that I believe that ah, if you just pay lip service to it, it's not going to happen.
>
> I think it's very important for instructors to model gender neutral terminology in the classroom. I certainly attempt to do that.
>
> I basically think the best way to do that is to model the language that you want them to use.
>
> If I, as a professor, was using sexist language and it was derogatory toward let's say males or females whatever, and I was setting the tone, so to speak, or the situational attitude or whatever of the rest of the people toward whoever I was, I was speaking to, then they might start speaking the same way to that person and think it was o.k.

Education (5)

Three respondents gave these five comments about the role of education and language reform. All of them were male and two were students. Some representative examples follow:

> It's the constant education about old habits that we've had and sometimes I don't think all those habits have been conscious.
>
> I don't think you can do this because the university is a place for, um, expressions of ideas. . . . you go to college because you expect to improve yourself. No one goes to college because they are perfect, already. So, everyone is going to bring in biases and their sexist, racist, every other kind of "ism" into the college with them and how can you separate out some than others. So, I think the college should be a place where you're enlightened on your activities so hopefully by the time you graduate you won't use this kind of language. But, I don't think we can expect people in college to not use sexism.

Authority, Rules, and Force

In the following three clusters, the respondents provided statements that center around language and power—power of authority, power of rules,

and power of force. Many instructors felt that these powers could be a positive influence in language reform while many students felt otherwise.

Power of Authority (11)

Themes in this cluster of responses relate to how the power of authority can affect language use and whether or not that use of power is appropriate. All of the these comments were made by three female respondents. Six responses came from instructors and five from one student. See the following examples of comments:

> I mean I'd follow it because if the instructor insisted on it because that was their rules of the classroom.
>
> . . . especially the English teachers, tell them they have to use the generic "he" and that I'm telling them they shouldn't use the generic "he" . . . they have to make choices as adults . . . they have to learn to deal with different people's demands which is given to them by their families, the adults that were in control of them.
>
> There are people who use extremely sexist language in my presence that I would never think to make any comment about it. I figure I am not going to have any impact. It's going to be a waste of my time and effort, they have more power than I do and I am not stupid.
>
> I don't believe you can cause change by command. Ah, I think that that's an artificial sense of trying to accomplish change. And, ah, and I think it, ah, the minute somebody leaves the command field, they revert back to their other language or they deride the command or they don't have the value that it takes to really use nonsexist language as part of the way you want to talk.

Rules to Change Behavior (7)

Five respondents provided seven responses about rules and language reform. All four of the students (two male and two female) claimed that rules were a negative means to change behavior. The one female instructor who responded in this group favored using rules to promote language

reform. Representative comments follow:

> I don't think it is so good to use rules like the departmental rule saying you can't do it because we have enough rules to follow as it is.
>
> I think that it [rules about nonsexist language] is absolutely required. I think that, that it should be part of what is expected in their G.E. courses. I certainly give handouts to my students on how to structure sentences and paragraphs and approaches to using nonsexist.
>
> They put rules on us, you know, they can't get in people's minds and say, "Look stop doing that." You know, stop feeling this way, you know, especially when they don't really see that it's a problem, so, at this time it might be necessary. Even though it will make people feel uncomfortable, it may make people more aware and even if they don't respect you they will act like they respect you.

Force and Command (3)

This cluster of power addressed the issue of using force to regulate language use. Three respondents (two females and one male, two students and one instructor) took the position that reform of language will not be produced by force or command. A typical comment follows:

> I think that's the only way [to reform language], where we are not forced.

Language Pragmatics

These three clusters were drawn together under the category of language pragmatics because they all related to the practical basis and functions of language use. Some respondents reported that our language will or has changed due to the changes in society. Respondents also discussed the issue of "political correctness." Most responses made reference to "political correctness" as going too far by creating too many euphemisms while others discussed the pragmatic need to be "politically correct." The last cluster

included responses about how language usage is dependent on the situation.

Language as Suitable/Practical with the Times (7)

Most of the respondents for this category believe that because society has changed, language has changed or is changing. It is both suitable and practical to change language now because of the current circumstances. Four males provided six comments and one female provided one comment. Two of the respondents were instructors and three were students. A few examples follow:

> So in my own self interest, it's evolved that I be more conscious of the gender terms that I am using because the situation has changed.
>
> And every year, and every era, . . . the dynamics of language continuously change. Um, because instructors are coming from . . . an old society when they have to teach, they have to approach it in a way, whereas, it has to be suitable for, for the students.
>
> Women are starting to be placed in these positions more commonly. And so, it's not uncommon to go the doctor and have it be a she. It's not uncommon to have a CEO of a company to be a woman.
>
> Because basically those roles, like chairperson or whatever, it could be male or female now. And I think it's important to keep in mind that it's not one or the other. Plus, it's mainly he's, but you know we are trying to change that.

Politically Correct (5)

Political correctness was discussed both in a positive and negative manner in this category. The responses were from four different respondents, one female and three males. Two of the respondents were instructors and two were students. A few examples of comments follow:

> I think that everything we should do, basically should be nonsexist. . . . I'm very concerned about the attitudes that we have about, about people who have stereotypes as it relates gender, as it relates also to ethnicity, so that we can be politically correct in every thing that we do.

> We're developing kind of you know "pc" language that reminds me of the euphemism the Victorian period, you know . . . people will not refer to breasts and legs of the turkey, but white meat and dark meat . . . we're are going toward this, this same exaggerated positions.

Language as Suitable with the Situation (5)

Four respondents provided five comments about how certain language can be suitable for some situations and not others. Two of the respondents were male students and two were female instructors. Representative examples follow:

> And I think as soon as people become conscious of this process, they now are more likely to think and think it through in words. They may not articulate the words, but I think they are using words for the thinking process and they realize that if they try different words, they get different responses.

> Society is changing. I think the language is going to come about in its own evolutionary timing to describe those changes because people are going to pay the price for making the mistakes. And when you say "chairman" and it's, the CEO's a woman, she might be offended, and that's the last person you probably want to offend if you're addressing that person.

> If I come in a very political environment, then I will use "they" and use plural [instead of the generic forms]. But I don't like to use that because to me it doesn't seem, um, quite right.

Language as Reflection

Both of the following clusters center around language as it reflects one's culture or society. The first cluster, language reflects culture, addresses the corresponding nature of language and culture while the second cluster, language reflects societal change, addresses more the causal nature of language and society. Society changes and then language reflects that change— not vice versa.

Language Reflects Culture (5)

The two respondents from this cluster believe that the type of culture a society has is reflected in its language system. One female faculty member and one male student provided the five responses for this cluster. An example follows:

> I learned about how our language, the dynamics of our language, is not a sexist thing. Not until, not until the introduction of certain things like, for example, a table like this is called "la mesa." "La" which means female . . . certain things in my, the old language that I grew up which is "Ilocano," we just say it as a word. Please hand me that chair, we say "tugaw." That's not, not, we don't say it like . . . they say it . . . but there are certain terms which is almost like "la," "le" you know, just like the French word, masculine and feminine thing. I don't think that's right.

Language Reflects Societal Change (3)

These two respondents provided three comments about how language reflects the current society and that change of language is quite proper and common to reflect the change in society. One respondent was a male instructor and one was a female instructor; both were instructors from the Economics department. An example of one of their comments follows:

> . . . in part may have originated because in the early times, you know, what the technology was, you know, how the, you know, the high death rate, you know, the division of labor that made economic sense was one in which, you know, the females would specialize more in the household production, because, you know, when you have a high death rate, you know, you have to have a lot of babies. For the family to have the . . . and if you're, you know, going to have a lot of babies, you know, which is the person that would have the comparative advantage in household production. It would be, you know, the wife. And our language probably reflects that to some extent, you know, so we talk about, you know, policemen, you know, instead of police officer and things like that. And naturally while the economic conditions are changing, the greater participation of women, you know, in the work force taking place, you know, is quite proper to

change this terms which I think has happened. So, I think, you know, a lot of the changing the language makes sense.

Language Provides Our Framework

The following two clusters relate to language providing a framework for our thought, our actions, and our reality. The two clusters that follow are language frames our thought and language as foundation/world view.

Language Frames Our Thought (11)

Four different respondents (two students and two instructors, two males and two females) provided these eleven responses that our language system shapes and frames our thoughts and provides the lens for our reality. Seven of the comments were from female instructors and four were from male students. Typical responses included:

> I think language really does frame the way we see the world. I think we see what we believe, and we believe what we are told, and what we see, those are described to us through language.

> The Filipino culture . . . society wise, the cultural value, then, perhaps, or in the language use, it's different . . . before, the society background was so matriarchal that there was a shift and change when Catholicism and western values came into, came to be introduced. Although we still use the old ways of speaking, sometimes "Ilocano" . . . "Ilocano" is sometimes nonsexist . . . the dynamic of language has changed over time. In some instances they use sexist language right now.

> One consistently talks about a "chairperson" of the board rather than a "chairman" of the board, eventually, I think it has an influence on people's thinking about the appropriateness of a woman in that role. So, they begin to think that it's normal or natural to be in a role that had been defined previously with a male term.

Language as Foundation/World View (4)

Similar to the above cluster that language frames our thought, this cluster emphasizes how language can be our foundation. In other words, the

language we use provides our ground work and that ground work affects our world view. Three respondents provided four responses. Two of the responses came from a male student and two came from female instructors. A sample of typical comments follows:

> Gender bias is particularly deeply ingrained in our use of language.
>
> If you think a certain way and you speak a certain way, you also act a certain way.

Emotional Aspects of Language

This category includes responses about the link between language and feelings and how people can use language to be sensitive, insensitive, to include and exclude.

Affect (11)

Eleven responses came from five respondents (four instructors and one student, four females and one male) in this cluster. They each discussed language as emotional and how it can affect themselves and others in a negative way. Typical examples follow:

> I'm not sure that they have to necessarily go through the experience to understand the emotionalism of the experience, and feel like we have the same type of . . . experiences that some may have who will be referred to in a very sexist way.
>
> We play "Ouch" games in my classes and anytime I say something that is an ouch to somebody else, then they say "ouch" and then we talk about it.
>
> It [sexist language] has made me pissed off. Sort of, part of my inner rage that where I can be tricked against my conscious desire if I am not constantly alert into dismissing people like me, my sex. I have to choose between being a person and being a woman. It tricks me.
>
> I said I would probably feel the same way if I were not being dismissed

by the language. So, try changing everything in your life to read "she" instead of "he." Think about all the authority figures being female instead of male. How are you going to feel about this?

Basically like in books if you see "he" if you are talking about a certain subject and they use "he" as an example throughout the whole book. I get kind of upset when I read stuff like that. Why not "she"?

Language for Inclusion/Exclusion (8)

Four female respondents provided eight responses in this cluster. Six responses from two instructors and two responses from two students discussed how language can be used to include or exclude others and how this is harmful. Most respondents discussed their own personal experiences of feeling excluded from the language. Typical comments follow:

I would just underscore the point about inclusion in the classroom and how excluded students can feel, when they feel you aren't talking about them or to them in your use of, the instructor's use of language.

I have felt excluded in a situation where the instructor consistently used male biased terminology. It makes me feel that I don't want to participate in the discussion. That he's not talking to me. That he doesn't want me to be a student in the class.

White, male, having authority, both institutional and personal authority, are less likely to think it's important to deal with the language because they are not excluded from it. And it doesn't affect them the same way as it does.

Language as Insensitive/Sensitive (5)

These three respondents (two instructors and one student, two males and one female) claimed that language can be insensitive and/or that people are sensitive to language. A few typical comments follow:

An awareness of the sexist language, an awareness of the fact that, um, they do cause harm. Being sensitive to that aspect of it, is important in changing it.

> You know I think you have to be careful about it just 'cause people's interpretations and people are so sensitive to it nowadays. It's just part of our culture, you just have to be sensitive to it.

Sexist Language and Humor

Three clusters seemed to center around language and humor. During the interviews, many respondents related the issue of sexist language to humor in various ways. Several related stories about how others have told sexist jokes in their presence. Others reported that they use humor to bring attention to the use of their own sexist language or other's. Similarly, some respondents stated that they use humor in reference to sexist language to ease the tension that it may create.

Sexist Jokes (11)

These six respondents discussed the use of sexist jokes and whether or not they find them offensive. Ten of the eleven comments came from five students and only one comment was from an instructor. Eight of the comments were from males and three were from females. Examples of the comments follow:

> I have taken some courses, whereas, the teacher just uses a lot of sexist language and sexist jokes and I felt that, you know, it's very derogatory.

> If the person is trying to be mean and stuff like that, I would define it [sexist language] as someone like telling jokes. While I don't think if anybody had respect for me, I don't think they would tell like really stupid jokes about, um, women. . . . If they had respect for women, or if women had respect for men, too, 'cause it goes both ways.

> We've all had those teachers that kind of like have ah been almost ah blatant about it just for 'cause they think it's cute. Not 'cause they think it's cute to be a sexist just 'cause they think it's funny to come across that way. But then they throw in the old "don't hold me to that, I'm just an old man" or something. Kind of just being funny. I don't

think anybody, I've never had a teacher that really upset any students.

> I've had a professor use sexist language and it was supposed to be a joke. And I looked around the class, especially at the female students, and um, they weren't laughing . . . that's a good sign to me that it's not funny. But, that was in the engineering where there were only two women in this class. The professor was just trying to be playful or something and he got a pretty good response from most of the class.

Humor to Draw Attention to the Language (3)

The three respondents that provided the three comments for this cluster described how they or an instructor have used humor to draw attention to sexist or nonsexist language. Two of these respondents were female instructors and one was a male student describing a female instructor. An example of the comments follow:

> I like to use humor just to call attention to the times when I am being sexist one way or the other, ah, so that people will catch it, listen for it, and know that it can be the opposite.

Humor to Ease Tension (3)

Two female instructors provided these three comments. They discussed how they use humor in a light-hearted way to ease the tension with their students when the issue of sexist language has been brought up. A typical comment follows:

> I'll make a joke about it. And I ask students does it matter if I said "he" or "she." Just to call attention to it in a in a light-hearted way.

Language Change as Trivial

These two clusters were drawn together under the category of language change as trivial because they both seemed to center around a disregard for the power of language. The clusters that follow are language as silly and language as unimportant.

Language as Silly (9)

Eight of the nine themes in this cluster expressed the respondent's own belief that language change can become silly. The other comment came from an instructor who was reporting that her students have sometimes charged language change as being silly or stupid. These nine responses came from five respondents, two of whom were instructors (six comments), and three were students (three comments). Three of the responses came from females and six from males. Examples of the comments follow:

> Unfortunately, I think that some people that don't have much to do . . . they start thinking what new term could I think of for this or for that . . . it becomes silly when people start referring to a pregnant woman as [unintelligible] oppressed. Give me a break.
>
> They don't like it [language reform]. Oh that's stupid, that's silly, why would anyone want to do that? Why not? Why are you so attached to that word?
>
> You know back in times and even in some cultures today, like this would be, for a woman to assume she had the right to make an issue of this, would be ridiculous.

Language Change as Unimportant (5)

Four respondents provided five responses about how language is unimportant or not a "big deal." The respondents were equally divided between students and instructors and males and females. A sampling of comments follow:

> I am not a huge semantics person. I think it is kind of nitty-gritty. If it is getting your point across, I don't think it's so necessary.
>
> . . . from a male's perspective you think what's the big deal [with language]?

Additional Clusters

Language Change (22)

Eight respondents (four instructors and four students, five males and three females) discussed the issue of language change and whether language reform could affect the change of people's views, behaviors, or society. Examples follow:

> Changing the language doesn't automatically change their attitudes but it allows the attitude to change.
>
> Certainly, one can change one's attitude by changing the language when one talks about something. . . . Just the way in which we couch the arguments. . . .it changes the attitude, it changes the assumptions that are made so that it can change . . . people's attitudes are based on non conscious information. . . . make them explore their assumptions, which changes them from assumptions to attitudes.
>
> So, I hope it changes people's . . . challenges them to think about what they're saying. Attitudes, I don't think we have the power to change attitudes, we have the power to influence change. The ultimate change has to be the individual so the more that we can educate, the better off we're going to be.
>
> I would hope so [that it would change society]. That's, I think that's the eventual goal. You know, if enough people do it, then maybe then it gets to spread, and then it begins to change the way we look at things in society, the way we speak in society.
>
> Can it change society? It depends on their level of experience and education. Definitely, I think as college students we're doing a great step on that and like I told you, we're aware of it in ways because we're in a campus where radical reforms and radical changes happen every day. It can change, definitely. I think, to a certain extent, if it is emphasized.
>
> I think that people's views change and then they use a different language to express that.
>
> . . . eventually [language reform can change society], it's an evolutionary thing, kind of like ah, just like in nature. You know it

takes a long time for a tiger to lose its stripes. So . . . it would be a long process.

At the margin . . . it can, you know, make some difference so for example the language could effect how a child growing up, you know, views opportunities and possibilities that he has. So, at the margin it can make a contribution. I don't think it's going to . . . change the world by itself, you know, changes in the language that are compatible with changes in circumstances . . . those will reinforce the change in circumstances and simply by giving it a new name to something, you do not alter the reality.

I don't think they should change the language, I think they should change the behavior.

The Generic "He" (21)

A very common topic in the interviews was the discussion of the generic "he." Surprisingly enough, the twenty-one comments came from only five people (two instructors and three students). Twenty comments came from four females and one comment came from one male student. A sampling of typical comments follow:

I usually try to use the title of the position and then, in, um, in, when I can't do that I usually use "he" or "she". But I use the same consistently, throughout, and make it generic.

And I know language can be gender biased and maybe there's a possibility that I have used "he" and I'm not even focusing on it. . . . it's just never been something I've concentrated on in my papers, I guess.

I think that, ah, I give people a lot of leeway to use the generic "he" for expediency's sake.

But I am still very careful about saying "he or she" to, ah, at least reinforce the impression with my students that it is possible, if not likely, that women will ah rise to top levels of business organizations.

I'll use the pronoun "he" and then I'll go back and go "oh I meant to say 'he or she'." And then I might make a remark about it or a joke

about it.

> Basically like in books if you see "he," if you are talking about a certain subject and they use "he" as an example throughout the whole book. I get kind of upset when I read stuff like that. Why not "she"?

Resistance (10)

Ten comments made by five respondents (two male and three female, three instructors and two students) dealt with student resistance to language reform. Eight responses came from female respondents and two responses came from male respondents. The comments that follow are some examples:

> My position on that is that if it isn't important, it's easy to do and there wouldn't be the resistance. To me, the strength of the resistance to the change, tells me how deeply the ideas are held by the other person.

> In our classes and our whole profession deals with working with people so we are very sensitive to people and people's needs. I don't think I've ever had any resistance on these issues.

> I certainly find females, in general, tend to be much more attentive and supportive of language change than I tend to see males. Now, that is not an automatic given. But, I would say that I have had more challenges to changing the system from males.

> There's no real outrage or anything [to nonsexist language use] and that's the way it should be really. It should be something that you think about as easily as you think about "his" firm.

Language and Respect (8)

Three respondents (two instructors and one student) provided eight comments about the importance of respect in regard to language. Although one respondent was male and two were female, seven of the eight comments came from the females. Typical examples follow:

> Even though it will make people feel uncomfortable, it may make people more aware and even if they don't respect you they will act like they respect you.

> They don't have the value that it takes to really use nonsexist language as part of the way you want to talk. As part of the way you respect people. I mean, I could use nonsexist language because you tell me I have to and I have no respect for you or maybe even derision for you, because you're making me use the language that I don't want to use.
>
> I would think it [using nonsexist language] would be great because he would be showing some respect for women.

Intent (7)

Four respondents, two instructors and two students, provided these seven comments about the importance of the speaker's intention in regard to language use. Two were male and two were female. Examples follow:

> I mean because of the fact that ah, it's just not in the words we use, you know. It's, it's really a combination of sexist behavior, but as far as sexist language, um, like. I mean someone could call you a "girl," and say, you know, it would be cool, or "gal" because you know that they are cool. But all of the sudden if the person is trying to be mean and stuff like that . . .
>
> I think there are a lot of people out there who weren't, couldn't be classified as sexist, they were just, they kind of got pulled along with the effects of sexism.
>
> People could get in trouble for saying something and they're really innocent, you know, they don't mean it. And somebody could just have a bad day and say, "Oh he said something," you know, and so maybe it's not a good thing to make the rule. I don't know. I mean that could be sticky.
>
> True sexist language is one that intentionally tries to, you know, basically intentionally, or if not intentionally, basically has the consequence of putting down one gender in relation to another or one that you know, you know, presumes that certain activities are barred from one group of people and so on.

This chapter has summarized the thematic clusters that were established from the transcribed data and grouped into categories. From the

eleven categories, thirty-four clusters were described by their theme, the characteristics of the participants that generated them, and examples of responses were given. These themes provide a fairly comprehensive catalog of the meanings that recur in this body of discourse. Identification of these units of meaning or clusters, provides the basis for the interpretive analysis that follows.

CHAPTER IV

The Assumptions About the Nature of Language and Pedagogy

The next two research questions went a step further with the thematic clusters and data than did research question one in order to interpret the assumptions that could be drawn from the discourse of the students and instructors. This chapter will discuss the two research questions that ask: What assumptions do students and instructors make about the nature of language and its role in shaping and changing society? What pedagogical assumptions do students and instructors make about how language change is taught and learned when discussing the issue of nonsexist language in education?

The Assumptions About the Nature of Language and its Role in Shaping and Changing Society

The second research question asked about the assumptions that students and instructors make about the nature of language and its role in shaping and changing society. In order to answer the question, I looked at any general themes about the nature of language that were apparent in the thematic clusters and the original data. I grouped several assumptions about language and titled them in the form of propositions. In the sections that follow I will describe these assumptions.

Language Use is a Habit

Language as a habit came through quite commonly in the student and instructor discourse. Unfortunately, many people remain unaware of bad habits, such as using sexist language, especially since many respondents believed that people have been simply conditioned as children to use the

particular language we use. The respondents spoke about how language is something that they or others need to become aware and cognizant of in order to change it. Because of this early conditioning, the respondents also tended to believe that one could change these "habits" at a younger age much easier than as an adult. In addition, since language is simply a habit, one can take less responsibility for their particular use of language.

Although habits are hard to change, if one makes a conscious effort to do so, the unlearning of a habit can take place. The competency model from Sprague and Stuart (1992) addresses the issue of the acquiring of new competencies. The model has four levels—unconscious incompetence, conscious incompetence, conscious competence, and unconscious competence. The first level, unconscious competence, occurs when one is unaware of an incompetency or bad habit. Once one is aware, the second level has been reached. After a decision has been made to change this new-found incompetency, a person becomes quite conscious about the effort with conscious competence. Finally, when the new competency or "good" habit becomes natural and somewhat effortless, the final level has been reached, unconscious competence. This model fits nicely with a person's acquisition of nonsexist terms.

As noted above, bad habits, such as the use of sexist language, can be replaced with good habits. One instructor spoke about acquiring the "good" habit of conscious-raising. She found that she has had to consciously acquire the habit of questioning the language and rid herself of the habit of using sexist language.

Language Can/Cannot Create Change

The last question of each interview asked the respondents if language reform can change people's views, behavior and/or society. The answers received were diverse and are worth noting. Regarding language changing views and attitudes, various respondents perceived language reform as one of the most powerful ways people can facilitate their own change. One instructor stated that "the ultimate change has to the individual so the more that we can educate, the better off we are going to be." He believes that education about language can change our views by making us more conscious of our behavior and hopefully that will lead to change. Similarly, an instructor who models nonsexist language stated that using gender neutral terms in class influences people's thinking about the appropriateness of women in a certain role that was previously defined by a male term. Another instructor stated:

> Certainly, one can change one's attitude by changing the language when one talks about something. If one only has to look at the treatment of the Soviet Union as our enemy in the cold war, and they are bad and terrible. Now, they are poor victims that are suffering their own internal strife and that we have to help them. Just the way in which we couch the arguments, we try to stand in someone else's position and see it described. Learning American history not spoken from the conqueror's point of view but the conquered point of view changes the viewpoint, it changes the attitude, it changes the assumptions that are made so that it can change. . . . people's attitudes are based on non conscious information, I think, for the most part. When we make them make it conscious. In other words, you make them explore their assumptions, which changes them from assumptions to attitudes.

Being exposed to language reform was also reported as having a subtle impact on people's thinking. One response maintained that changing the language doesn't automatically change people's attitudes but it allows the

attitude to change. A student claimed that if language reform is implemented gradually it can make people more open minded but not necessarily affect adult behavior. Another respondent thought that language could affect how a child views opportunities and possibilities the child has growing up. But at the same time, that same respondent believes that language can only make a contribution to change at the margin. He claims that if changing the language is compatible with changes in circumstance then language can at the margin, reinforce that change.

In addition to changing people's views and attitudes, language reform was reported as having the ability to change behavior. Two students believed that we learn from our language and communication we are exposed to and this affects thought and behavior. Therefore, a student claimed that "if you think a certain way and you speak a certain way, you will also act a certain way." Similarly, one student stated that "since it [sexist language] has been made an issue a lot more people are aware of it and are willing to give women probably a lot more chances than they would have before, whereas it would have been routine to hire a man for a certain job . . . it's opened some doors for women."

While some respondents believed that this change in views and behavior could eventually change society, they thought that it would be a long process. One respondent, in discussing the issue of nonsexist language use, stated that "if enough people do it, then maybe then it gets to spread, and then it begins to change the way we look at things in society, the way we speak in society." Another respondent felt that language reform could change society but not necessarily in a positive way. She asserted that the language,

in and of itself, is not always used to enlighten the masses. "I think it's a tool used by the controlling group to manipulate their positions and our responses and that we can do the same thing." The same instructor contends that:

> By changing my language, I am not going to get paid more. I don't think it is going to change the institution of pay and equity. But, I think it will allow for the change in the institution. I don't think that I am powerful enough by just changing the language, that you change the institutions, but you . . . permit the space for the institution to change.

Other respondents argued that language reform could not change society at all. Although one student would prefer the change in society, she believes that it would be too difficult. Similarly, another student thought that language is not close enough to people's hearts to create any change. One instructor who did not see the current society as necessarily needing change reported that society is changing already and that the language in its own evolutionary time will come to describe those changes.

At the most extreme end of the spectrum, two respondents did not see language reform as having the ability to change anything. One instructor claimed that it is the other way around; people's views change and then they use a different language to express that. A student did not think that language reform in regard to changing people's views, behavior, or society made any sense. She believes that people are just ignorant and it is going to take more than the changing of language to change them. She states "I don't think they should change the language, I think they should change the behavior."

As the above review of responses indicates, views about the shaping

forces of language are extremely varied and individualized. Some respondents believe language reform can create change while others do not. Some believe it can change views and behavior, but not society. Some respondents believe language reform can change the young but cannot change adults.

Language Has Various Functions in Society

Along with people's views of the shaping forces of language, people's view of the functions of language in society is also very individualized. Language is often seen as a mirror, a tool or weapon, and/or a frame. Some people suggest that language serves only one of these functions while other people claim that language can have several functions.

Language reflects society. Many respondents spoke about how, because our society is changing, our language is changing in order to reflect that. One economics instructor claimed that "Society is changing. I think the language is going to come about in its own evolutionary timing to describe those changes because people are going to pay the price for making the mistakes." She also stated that no one plotted words to be used but that the words have evolved "out of just customary use." In regard to the word "housewife" she stated that "it evolves out of the fact that people, women, were traditionally in the house. So, there is this efficiency in language that people don't design into it."

In discussing the same issue, a male economics instructor believed that females in the past would specialize more in household production and have many children because of the high death ratio. He believed that a woman was called a "housewife" because she had "the comparative advantage in

household production. And our language probably reflects that."

In addition, respondents spoke about how language reflects one's culture. One instructor stated that you can learn a great deal about a culture by looking at its language. She claimed:

> I was told by people in Spanish that "victim" no matter who the victim is, man or woman, is called feminine. "Victim" is always a female word. What does that mean? You can be a detective by using the language. What are the images? Whose language is studied? Why is white middle class, middle Atlantic accents seen as the language and everyone else is the Spanglish, or Afro-American English?

A Filipino student spoke about his own language and his experiences learning new languages. He believes that language "gives me a great learning point of view about what people expect of me as whatever gender I am." He discussed that in his language they have gender neutral pronouns. He stated that in the past, his culture did not mark distinctions according to gender as much as they do now. The reason he provided for this was the influence of Western thought and religion on the Filipino culture. In essence, he believes that the culture has changed and the language now reflects that change. For example, he stated "I learned about how our language, the dynamics of our language, is not a sexist thing. Not until, not until the introduction of certain things."

Language is a tool and a weapon. Human beings use language to interact with one another. Because such acts as persuading, inquiring, requesting, defending, challenging, and retreating are generally carried out through the use of language, people often see language as a tool (Frank & Treichler, 1989). One instructor pointed out that language is "a tool used by the controlling group to manipulate their positions and our responses and

that we can do the same thing."

People who view language as a tool often see language as a means to an end. This approach corresponds to the pragmatic function of language that describes language as a way to get things done. One instructor stated that students realize that "if they try different words, they get different responses." Another respondent identified the necessity to change one's language in certain situations. "If I come in a very political environment, then I will use "they".

In addition to a tool, many respondents described the different ways that language can be used as a weapon. This theme came through in the cluster about affect in which four of the five respondents of this cluster were female. The emotions discussed in regard to language ranged from being angry and "pissed off" to being hurt. One African American instructor spoke about how he can relate to the "emotionalism" of sexist language because of his experiences with racist language. He claims that both racist and sexist language have been used as a weapon by the controlling group to cause harm. He plays "Ouch" games in his class that allow students to say the word "ouch" when some one's use of language has hurt or bothered them. He then brings it to the forefront for discussion.

Many of the responses from females spoke about how language makes them angry because it has been used as a weapon both to dismiss and to trick them. A few of the respondents wondered how males would feel if they were constantly dismissed by the language. Another respondent talked about how she has been taught to buy into the language without questioning it and that makes her angry. She has to be "constantly alert" to the language so that it

does not dismiss her sex. She claims it makes her choose between being a woman and being a person.

Language frames our thought. Beyond language use as a weapon, some respondents believed that language can actually frame our thought and reality. One respondent stated that "I think language really does frame the way we see the world. I think we see what we believe, and we believe what we are told, and what we see, those are described to us through language." Another respondent believed that if we consistently talk about a "chairperson" of the board rather than a "chairman" of the board, eventually that will have an influence on people's thinking about the appropriateness of a woman in that role. "They begin to think that it's normal or natural to be in a role that had been defined previously with a male term."

Because language may provide the lens in which we see the world, attention to our language and its use seems essential. "Language frames the way we see the world and in order for people to understand how they are seeing the world, I think they have to be more cognitive of their language." One instructor claimed that when she questions the foundations for any phenomenon, she asks herself what the language is doing as a function to help her organize her information. "Can I change this attitude, well, can I change this language, can I change this perception"?

From this perspective, relying on a single language seemingly would provide only one frame to see the world through. Two respondents discussed how a person who knows multiple languages is not as limited in thought because multiple languages offer multiple frames. One response was:

> We are limited when we speak only one language. People with multiple languages have multiple vocabularies to talk about things.

> People with multi-lingual backgrounds have more experiences in the world. . . . They just have more ways to experience it. They have more definitions available to them than people who speak only one language.

Language Can Include and Exclude People

An interesting point about the thematic cluster regarding inclusion and exclusion is that all of the respondents were female. They spoke about how the language can both include and exclude others. They gave examples of how they have previously felt excluded from the language and how important it is to include both genders. One respondent claimed that males think of language change as unimportant because they are not excluded from the language.

Language Can be Respectful and Disrespectful

Language as respectful or disrespectful was another common theme discussed mostly by women. Seven of the eight responses came from women. Many of the responses maintained that using nonsexist language can show respect for women and that using sexist language is disrespectful of women. One student stated "I would think it [using nonsexist language] would be great because he would be showing some respect for women."

In addition to language showing respect, nonsexist language can camouflage disrespect. Respondents reported that the use of nonsexist language can be used to hide disrespect for women. One respondent stated that "even if they don't respect you, they will act like they respect you." Another female said that someone can use nonsexist language because they are made to but they may have disrespect or even derision for the person asking them to be respectful through the use of language.

Authorities Have Power with Language

Respondents that discussed the power authority has with language were all female. The respondents addressed language, either sexist or nonsexist, as a tool used by the controlling group and language change because of the power of authority.

Several respondents claimed that language can be used as a tool by the controlling group or whoever has authority. One instructor addressed her concern with the fact that students have multiple authorities trying to control their language. "The English teachers tell them they have to use the generic 'he' and that I'm telling them they shouldn't use the generic 'he' . . . they have to learn to deal with different people's demands which is given to them by their families, the adults that were in control of them."

A few respondents spoke about their tolerance for the use of sexist language by authority figures or people with more power. One instructor claimed that there are people who have used extremely sexist language in her presence that she would never think to make any comment about it. "I figure I am not going to have any impact. It's going to be a waste of my time and effort. They have more power than I do and I am not stupid." One student spoke about her discomfort with the use of sexist language but felt she could not say anything about it "because it's an authority figure. It's very difficult to stand up to authority figures. It would make me uncomfortable."

Several of the respondents' statements discussed language change because of the power of authority. One student stated that she would use the language in the classroom simply because the instructor insisted and it was the instructor's rules of the classroom. "I will say 'he/she' if I have to." On

the other side of the coin, an instructor shared that she doesn't want students to use the language simply because she told them to. She believes "That's just taking the authority and saying, o.k., in this class I have to do it this way. Rather than maybe there's a reason to do this. Maybe there's a balance that I can make for myself."

Pedagogical Assumptions About Language Teaching and Learning

The third research question asked about the pedagogical assumptions that students and instructors make about how language change is taught and learned when discussing the topic of nonsexist language in education. Both the instructors and the students provided a wide range of responses regarding these issues. In order to answer the question, I looked at any general themes about the nature of teaching and learning that were apparent in the thematic clusters and the original data. I interpreted the data, grouped several assumptions about language, and titled them in the form of propositions. In regard to teaching language reform, the responses ranged from not doing anything to facilitate language reform all the way to asking the students to challenge their language foundation. In the sections that follow I will describe these assumptions.

Nonsexist Language Should Not be Taught

Some respondents believed that little, if anything, should be done in the area of language reform. One respondent felt that the language should not be changed but the behavior should be changed. Although she has experienced a great amount of sexism being the only female in her male-dominated major and has placed a grievance against the department, she believes that there shouldn't be any restriction on the language. She claimed

that:

> The more educated someone gets, the more sneaky they get, you know, and I found out these guys are real sneaky. They covered their butt, because if I wrote it down in a letter it would just sound like, "Oh, that's no big deal," you know? Their language didn't mean anything. It was just a combination of everything. . . . I don't think they should change the language, I think they should change the behavior.

Another student stated that he would challenge an instructor that asked him and other students to use nonsexist language. He doubts that the instructor could provide a worthy definition of sexist language and he would, therefore, disagree with the instructor. "You can't just make a law that no one use it. I think that if he [the instructor] wants to make that a responsibility or a priority of his to educate students about that, then he can make material available to students that want to read it to educate themselves. He also believes that instructors "should realize that their primary role is to . . . transmit knowledge. And, um, the student can read the book for themselves."

Nonsexist Language Should be Taught in Certain Classes Only

While the above respondent believes that there should not be any reform of language, other respondents believed that language reform should be taught, yet only in specific classes. An Economics instructor believes that he does not play a role in language reform because "given my subject matter, I do not give very much attention to it because what I am talking of . . . marginal costs, marginal benefits, profit maximization." He commented that pronouns usually do not enter into the conversation in those abstractions. Two other instructors stated that language reform should be taught in classes where intensive writing takes place. One instructor stated that "it's most

important to do that in a class where there's a lot of writing . . . the courses I'm teaching don't have a lot of writing. It's a lot of speaking, a lot of oral reports, but not so much writing." Another instructor said "I hope that it is covered also in our 100W class with our 100W instructor, they do a lot of writing in that class."

A few students who have taken communication courses that discussed language reform believed that it should be primarily taught in communication classes. In reflecting back on his classroom experience, one student stated that "in communication classes they should actually teach alternatives and alternative ways of speech."

Nonsexist Language Should be Taught by Modeling

Five respondents stated that modeling should be used in order for students to learn nonsexist language. Because instructors act as role models, modeling nonsexist language was seen by these respondents as a sufficient means to facilitate language change. One instructor believes that the "best way to do that is to model the language that you want them to use." One instructor claims that he models the generic "she" in the classroom. He stated that "to economize instead of using 'he/she', I simply use 'she', you know, use 'her' so in a sense, I know some students may feel uncomfortable and having both, not to be very economical, simply use the feminine." An interesting point about this instructor is that during the interview he used the generic "he" several times. Never did he use the generic "she."

Nonsexist Language Should be Taught and Learned by Correction

Beyond modeling the language some respondents go further and correct their own language and/or correct other people's language. Three

instructors gave examples of how and when they correct language in order for students to learn nonsexist language terminology. One instructor tells the students that "that's the only time that I give myself permission to be what I would consider rude, and stop them or correct their language or help them, perhaps, express it in a different way." When reading student writing, one instructor looks for language that "jumps out" at him and is offensive in nature. He will then "correct them in a positive form . . . 'be careful how you're using this term, what does it really mean?' and so forth." An interesting point about this instructor is that he failed to notice the use of sexist language in the first two scenarios during the interview. Perhaps it did not "jump out" at him.

Another discrepancy regarding correcting people's language occurred with a student who, although she had previously claimed that language reform is trivial, stated "people know better than to talk to me like that [using sexist language]. I think people know better because I'll correct people. I'm a real equality kind of person in everything."

Nonsexist Language Should be Taught by Imposing Criteria and Rules

This was a common theme among instructors more than among students. In fact, four of the six instructors endorsed the University of Maine's policy requiring the use of nonsexist language. One instructor agreed that rules about nonsexist language are "absolutely required. I think that, that it should be part of what is expected in their G.E. courses. I certainly give handouts to my students on how to structure sentences and paragraphs and approaches to using nonsexist [language]." Similarly, a student claimed that Nursing instructors really emphasize nonsexist language. "It is incorporated

in the criteria every time you write a paper."

Nonsexist Language Should Not be Taught with Rules

On the other side of the coin were most of the students. Four of the six of them discussed, in one way or another, how rules should not be used to teach nonsexist language. While many students agreed that they would follow the rules, they felt that such mandates were not effective. "They put rules on us, you know, they can't get in people's minds and say, 'Look! Stop doing that.'" Another student stated "I don't think it is so good to use rules like the departmental rule saying you can't do it because we have enough rules to follow as it is." After reading about the policy at University of Maine, one student commented "I don't think you can do this because the university is a place for, um, expressions of ideas."

Student Agreement is Necessary in Teaching Language Reform

Two male students who did not perceive rules as an effective means for facilitating language reform believed that student agreement must be reached in order for student language use to change. One student stated that the teacher should:

> create a forum for the students to decide for themselves because history has kind of dictated it for us. So, you know, you should kind of put everything on an equal playing field and let the students kind of debate it for themselves and see if they can come up with logical reasoning, unbiased terms before it is forced on them one way or the other.

The other student echoed this view by stating "as an instructor, they gotta' make a personal contract with the students . . . because everybody has their own set of values and beliefs, you know, from when they grew up." He believes that instructors should approach language reform in a way that is suitable for the students.

Nonsexist Language Should be Addressed in the Classroom

The need to be educated and made aware of sexist language and the alternatives was mentioned quite commonly. Ten respondents addressed the need for people to become aware of their language use. The responses were somewhat vague, but the feeling was that education is the key to the success of language reform. One stated that "I think that in order to get rid of sexist language, it has to be brought to people's attention that it is harmful that they are doing it . . . you can't cure, you can't get rid of any problem that you have unless they are made known to you." Another believes that "In order for people to understand how they are seeing the world, I think they have to be more cognitive of their language."

Classroom education about language was stressed by some respondents. One instructor stated that "it's an excellent idea to teach students, ah, strategies for using gender, gender neutral terminology." Similarly, a student who believed that a class or workshop about nonsexist language would be a great step, felt the need because "It's the constant education about old habits that we've had and sometimes I don't think all those habits have been conscious. Some have just been there inherently . . . [language] maybe can make us more conscious of our behavior."

Consciousness-Raising Should be Used for Language Reform

Although this concept would appear similar to the responses about language awareness and making people conscious of their language, it is not. Two meanings of consciousness came through in the discourse—becoming conscious of your language by being aware of it or transforming your view of language through consciousness-raising. Whereas the other assumption

previously mentioned takes an elementary approach by simply making others aware of their language use, this assumption conceives of consciousness-raising as transforming one's world view. One instructor felt strongly that consciousness-raising was key in language reform. She believes that people's attitudes are based on non-conscious information, for the most part. When she asks students to make them conscious, they, in turn, explore their assumptions not only about language, but about reality. She claims that:

> Once they become aware of them, then they can't trick themselves and say they don't believe that, they've just said they believed it. They've just admitted their position in the world. Then they have to decide why they feel that way. Was it because they have never thought about it? Was it because of their personal experience that then made them make a generalization that gets applied to other people without testing it against reality? And I think as soon as people become conscious of this process, they now are more likely to think and think it through in words. They may not articulate the words, but I think they are using words for the thinking process and they realize that if they try different words, they get different responses.

She further believes that instructors attempting to use consciousness-raising techniques for language reform need to acknowledge the impact of what they are doing. She claims that she is asking students to rethink the foundations of the way they see the world. "The first time you are asked to think about everything you've rested every single perception about the world on and you're taking that foundation . . . it's like an earthquake . . . it shakes the very foundation of a world view." She asks her students not only to look at the foundational blocks that they have built the rest of their world view on, but to reconstruct that entire world view all over again "for the very process of looking at the foundation shakes it."

Language is Learned by Conditioning and/or Repetition

Five respondents, all students, felt that we learn by being conditioned and/or by repetition. One student believes that "we are conditioned to learn by the communication we are exposed to." Therefore if we are exposed to sexist language, such as the traditional generics, we will use them. The same student claimed that:

> It's [using sexist language] pretty much part of the conditioning in how much they grasp on it. In our society so many sexist things are said and we are taught to learn that way, so I think everyone is subjected to some learning of that. So, I have to constantly try to unlearn that and not repeat that. But I think it takes away some of my freedom. I feel it takes away some of my freedom but, freedom I don't want.

Although this student views sexist language as an undesirable conditioned behavior, the unlearning of that behavior takes away some of his freedom to use language that he was trained to use.

Language is Learned by Reinforcement

A few respondents believed that language should be learned by reinforcement. One student claimed that "it's good to encourage it in positive reinforcement . . . do a positive reinforcement of it [language]." The same student also mentioned that if the reinforcement was done gradually, it almost would seem like brainwashing.

This chapter discussed the assumptions about the nature of language and its role in shaping and changing society and the pedagogical assumptions about language learning and teaching. The discourse revealed a number of assumptions and tensions about the nature of language: language use is a habit, language can create change or language cannot create change, language can reflect society or language can frame society, language can be a used as a

tool or language can be used as a weapon, language can include people and language can exclude people, language can be respectful and language can be disrespectful, and authority has power with language.

The pedagogical assumptions about language learning and teaching were also very mixed. Either nonsexist language should not be taught or nonsexist language should be taught in certain classes only. Either nonsexist language should be taught by modeling or nonsexist language should be taught and learned by correction. Either nonsexist language should be taught by imposing criteria and rules or nonsexist language should not be taught with rules. Either nonsexist language should simply be addressed in the classroom or student agreement is necessary in teaching language reform. Either consciousness-raising should be used for teaching and learning language or language should be learned by conditioning , repetition, and/or reinforcement. These incongruent views and assumptions about language are likely due to the differing language theories held by the respondents.

CHAPTER V

Language Theory

The fourth and final research question inquired about the implicit theories revealed from students' and instructors' discourse about sexist language and how they compare to the more formal theories of language. In order to answer this question, it was necessary to examine and interpret the original data, the clusters and the assumptions to identify implicit language theories of the students and instructors. In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of each of the six language approaches discussed in chapter one and compare the student and instructor discourse to these approaches. In addition, I will discuss two implicit language theories that the student and instructor discourse seemed to center around.

Six Language Approaches

Grossberg (1979) has outlined six views of language and meaning arrayed on a two-dimensional matrix. As mentioned in chapter one, I adopted his classifications of meaning and language in order to organize the conceptual issues, frame the different approaches, and compare them to the students' and instructors' theory of language. The six views of language are subjective and objective referential views, subjective and objective systemic views, subjective and objective processual views.

Referential View

Both subcategories of the referential view consider language as an instrument people use, and the meaningfulness of language resides in its reference to some collection of entities (either subjective mental entities or objective external entities). Language is void of intrinsic meaning apart from

the language user's consciousness and can be viewed as a container which remains separable from the meaning/information it brings us. The popular quotation from *Through the Looking Glass* corresponds with the referential approach:

> "When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."
>
> "The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."
>
> "The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be the master—that's all." (Postman & Weingartner, 1969, p. 132)

The distinction between subjective and objective views in the general referential conception is the question of whether the reference or the referent is the primary source of meaning. As previously mentioned, the objective referential position denies the existence of any realm of mental entities. Although it is difficult to determine by the comments whether some of the respondents viewed meaning as a given property of the object or of consciousness, many of the responses given seemed to favor the subjective referential view of language and meaning. Language was labeled unimportant, silly, a habit, and merely a reflection of society. I have uncovered several of the possible links of these labels to the referential view and discuss them in the following section.

Language is unimportant. Proponents of the subjective referential view see language as a container for our meanings. The words do not actually mean, but meaning resides in people. Therefore, too much attention to words may seem a waste of time to some people who follow this perspective. Many of the respondents' comments claiming that language was "no big deal" echoed this perspective. One student stated that "I am not a

huge semantics person. I think it is kind of nitty-gritty. If it is getting your point across, I don't think it's so necessary. " This statement implies that as long as a person can get her or his point across through his or her use of language, the particular words used doesn't really matter. Another student who addressed the issue of a person's intent was opposed to the attention to language because she felt that "people could get in trouble for saying something and they're really innocent, you know, they don't mean it." She further stated that "someone could call you a "girl," and . . . it would be cool, or "gal" because you know that they are cool. But . . . if the person is trying to be mean . . ."

Comments in support of this view often mentioned the generic "he." One student stated that when he had to use a pronoun, he would use either the generic "he" or "she" consistently throughout. I noticed in the interview that he chose to use only the generic "he," quite frequently, as a matter of fact. He stated that he chooses generics because they still get his point across. Similarly, an instructor allows her students to use the language they choose to. "I give people a lot of leeway to use the generic 'he' for expediency's sake." Once again, she seems to know what they are "intending to mean." Another student felt that when she uses the generic "he," she means "he or she" and that teachers' attention to the detail of that use of language is "nitty-gritty." She will use both pronouns if she is made to but would rather not for she does not agree with such attention to language.

The above comments imply that language is relatively unimportant, so therefore, there is no need to change it. Yet, two male respondents shared the above view about the lack of importance in the words and their

conveyance of meaning, asserted that because the language is so unimportant to them, it is no "big deal" to change it for others. One student stated that "even if I think it's not a big deal . . . there's no purpose in causing offense to people for nothing." On a similar note, an instructor stated:

> it's [the language] not something I spend much time on just . . . if I know that I'm going to cause somebody offense and I can avoid it at a reasonable cost . . . why not do it. Even if I think it's not a big deal but . . . there's no purpose in causing offense to people for nothing.

Therefore, one can conclude that the belief that language is trivial can be a double edge sword. Either it is no "big deal," so why change it? Or it is no "big deal," so why not change it?

Language change is silly. Similar to the above idea that language is unimportant, several comments were made about language change being silly. One instructor, in discussing the practicality of language, believed that for the same meaning "previously you had one word now you have five. And that as an economist doesn't strike me." He further stated that "people that don't have much to do . . . they start thinking 'what new term could I think of for this or for that' . . . it becomes silly. . . . simply by giving it a new name to something, you do not alter the reality." Once again, these comments seem to pair with the position that words do not mean, so why use new words?

Language use is a habit. Several responses stated that language was simply a habit. As a child one learns it and uses it without any conscious thought about the actual word usage. Habitual use is not intentional and therefore the meanings of the words used habitually are not intentional either. The meaning resides in the mind of the language user. One student states that "it doesn't seem worth putting a whole lot of stress into [using

nonsexist language] just 'cause it's just habit. That's how people develop through history." Another student responded that people "don't pay attention to what they are saying half the time so it's really difficult. People say things . . . where they don't know that they said it or not." Once again, people are paying attention to the meaning in their mind and do not recognize the possibility that there is also meaning in the words.

One student questioned his own meaning-making because of the language reform movement. To him, words refer to what he means for them for them to refer to. He stated "I'm not a chauvinist at all. But, I find myself asking myself, 'now is that chauvinistic?' Just you've been, that's a word you grew up to use, you know, when you related to a fireman, woman or man, . . . you said "fireman." Maynard (1970) states that "our culture trains us and reinforces us to view the world through semantically colored glasses. Language is our greatest habit" (p. 136).

Language is merely a reflection of society. The idea that language merely reflects how we think about society corresponds well with the subjective referential view. We use words to represent our meaning of reality as we have come to know it. When reality changes, we find words to represent the new meaning of reality. Language is simply a practical tool. One instructor stated that because society is changing, "the language is going to come about in its own evolutionary timing to describe those changes." Another respondent stated that once society changes, people's views change and "then they use a different language to express that."

Systemic View

As previously mentioned, the referential view assumes the reality of

our experience is both of ourselves as consciousness and of the world. The systemic view differs in that it examines the role language itself plays in constituting the meaning of our experience of both the self and the world (Grossberg, 1979). The language is far from being neutral because meaning is seen as a property of the linguistic system or social act and, therefore, does not separate consciousness and the world.

Objective systemic. The proponents of the two subcategories of the systemic view divide over how to describe the linguistic system. The objective systemic approach emphasizes the relationship among the signs of the linguistic system. The structure of our understanding of ourselves and the world is determined by the structure of the language system itself.

Some of the comments from the respondents asserted that our language system can actually frame our thought and reality. Similar to Sapir's view of language mentioned previously, one instructor stated that "language frames the way we see the world and in order for people to understand how they are seeing the world, I think they have to be more cognitive of their language." A similar statement by a student discussed that:

> language is, comes from a very deep and complex part of the mind just like behavior. I believe that you can't pinpoint language in your thoughts, they all exist in your mind. They are not part of conscious control. . . . gender bias is particularly deeply ingrained in our use of language.

This statement contends that gender bias exists within our language system. In addition, our language system makes up our thoughts so much so that we fail to be conscious of our language use.

Some respondents described how we are controlled and limited by our language system. Maynard (1970) believes that "the limits of our world are

determined by the limits of our language" (p. 136). One instructor stated that our language system gives us our gender roles and limits our choices. Another instructor stated that "we are limited when we speak only one language. People with multiple languages have multiple vocabularies to talk about things." In addition, she expressed that people with multi-lingual backgrounds have more experiences in the world because they have more ways to experience it. "They have more definitions available to them than people who speak only one language."

A trilingual student helped to further the above point when he addressed the pronoun gender distinction. He stated that when he learned his language, it did not have the pronoun distinctions (he/she) like Spanish or English. After learning two other languages, he notices gender distinctions made but still does not think in terms of those gender distinctions. During the interview, he spoke about a male professor and unknowingly interchanged the pronouns he used. For example, he stated "I had one microbiology teacher who used to say a lot of jokes about her mother and about her, her ex-wife. . . . and then at one point he, she, he even said jokingly . . ." One could conclude from this example that he was still operating under his original language system which did not mark gender. Yet, because he used the pronouns, although incorrectly, he was aware of the necessity to differentiate. In addition, the other languages he learned made him more conscious of the frame his language system has provided for him.

The comments about language providing our world view and foundation argue the same point as Saussure did with the distinction of *langue* and *parole*. Because *langue* is the system or code that is prior to actual

language use, it is the same for all members of a language community and it creates our social foundation. One instructor discusses language in the beginning of all of her classes because she believes the language system shapes our reality. She states that "we can't even talk about the issues we are going to talk about until we talk about the language we're going to use to talk about the issues."

Subjective systemic. As previously noted, proponents of the objective systemic view find it difficult to account for historical change and individual creativity because the code, the language, is static. However, the subjective systemic approach begins with the primacy of speech. Meanings emerge from the system of language use, speech acts, or symbolic interactions. These meanings are publicly available and identifiable based on the role they play in a particular context or situation.

Because language is seen as an action, as doing something, the assumption that language is a tool or a weapon corresponds with the subjective systemic view. Language has functional uses and practical value. Maynard (1970) stated that "one can liken language to air—colorless, odorless, necessary for survival: but language can also be like carbon monoxide, also a colorless, odorless gas, but very poisonous" (p. 135). In other words, language can be taken for granted as a tool, but still may be used as a weapon. Many responses state that language use can actually show respect, disrespect, include, exclude, and harm others. One instructor concluded her interview by stating that "I would just underscore the point about inclusion in the classroom and how excluded students can feel, when they feel you aren't talking about them or to them in your use of . . . language." Another

instructor stated that "in order to get rid of sexist language, it has to be brought to people's attention that it is harmful that they are doing it."

Many respondents also believed that language use can be modified in order to receive certain responses. They do not take a philosophical or ethical view of these issues at all, but a pragmatic one. One respondent found that once students become conscious of their language system, "they realize that if they try different words, they get different responses." She further addressed this issue by discussing how the naming process can act to affect people's perceptions. She renames sexist language so that students are less resistant. She tells them "Even if you don't want to . . . call it nonsexist, how 'bout we call it accurate or inclusive language." She states that it is:

> like calling missiles peace-keepers. . . you can say it is part of our defense budget instead of our military budget, people will say "we don't want to cut our defense budget but we got to stop our military spending." So, how it's called creates in people different issues.

Processual View

The proponents of the processual view argue that the fundamental structure of human experience is an ongoing process of the constitution of meaning within which subject and object are constituted. As mentioned previously, these orientations acknowledge a unity of subject and object in the process of signification preceding their separation.

Subjective processual. The subjective processual view goes beyond the subjective systemic view by describing the particular relation between language and transcendental consciousness (Grossberg, 1979). The most general characterization of the subjective processual view involves the redefinition of experience in terms of the process of intentionality, which is the constantly repeated conjunction of people and the world (Grossberg, 1979).

Language is not frozen or static. Several themes did acknowledge an awareness of change by seeing language as a process rather than a frozen system. One respondent stated that "every year, and every era . . . the dynamics of language continuously change. . . . instructors . . . have to approach it in a way . . . suitable . . . for the students."

However, only one of the respondents' comments repeatedly expressed senses of language and meaning similar to the subjective processual view. She addressed meaning as the conjunction of more than just the signifier and the signified. She stated that:

> there are things beyond language. . . . Language, as we talk about it intellectually, is one phenomena, but that there are many languages people respond to using art, dance, things that don't have words specifically linked to them, but that communicate to us. We are moved by them. We have another system that resounds . . . we are more than just the intellectual, attitudinal manipulation of language. There are other systems of communication.

As an instructor, she describes these systems to her students in order to "talk about relationships linked to being fully human."

Objective processual. The objective processual approach is the most radical of views because it rejects the notion of a source or origin of meaning. Reality is a process constitutive of the meaningfulness and structure of experience. Language and language use cannot be separated. Because this view does not look for "meaning" of a text (assuming that there exists some stable and unified set of signifieds hidden below the surface of the signifiers), it is near impossible for me to determine from these texts whether or not a respondent held this view of meaning and language. And if they did, their expression of it, their meaning of it, would only exist in the moment.

Implicit Language Theories

The above assumptions of the respondents that compare to formal language theory are based on their implicit language theory. An implicit language theory organizes a person's views about language. Certain components make up a language theory. The issues that are addressed in one's implicit language theory are 1) the definition of language 2) the learning of language, 3) the making of meaning through language and 4) how language is used. Many of the responses given by the people in this study centered around two different implicit theories of language. The first implicit theory is that language is a system of signs that we create and use. The second also sees language as a system of signs, but a constantly changing and evolving system that creates us. In the next section I will discuss the assumptions that support these two theories.

Language is a System of Signs that We Create and Use

Many respondents saw language as a shared code we have created and use. Our language system is something one is conditioned to use as a child. The language we use is largely dependent on the functions that it serves and is often learned by trial and error. It is a habit that many of us are unconscious of. The meaning is in the user, not the referent. Because language is simply used to refer, to transmit information, and to make the user's meaning transparent, the language itself is relatively innocent. Yet, being conscious and aware of the words can help people understand how others may be interpreting the meaning. Several respondents stated that because other people are sensitive to language use now, they will choose to use different words to make others happy. One person stated that "you have

to be careful about it just 'cause people's interpretations and people are so sensitive to it nowadays."

Although many respondents spoke about the need to be aware of language use, they failed to do so in their interview. Only two of the respondents noted the use of sexist language in the two student and instructor dialogue scenarios that began the interviews. These were both female instructors. In addition, although most respondents agreed that using the generic "he" was a form of sexist language, five respondents used the generic "he" in their interviews. Two of the respondents were Economics instructors (one male, one female) and the other three were male students. For example, one instructor stated "The language could affect how a child growing up, you know, views opportunities and possibilities that *he* has." One could conclude that these respondents very much still believe that what they mean is the meaning that counts. In other words, to them, the generic "he" still means both genders.

Language is a System of Signs that Create Us

Language as a system of signs that create us is another implicit theory of language that only a few of the respondents seemed to have. Language is a constantly changing and evolving system. We learn language for the most part, unconsciously through observing models and immersion into the language system. The language we use shapes our thought and meaning comes from our language system. The responses that supported this view discussed how language provides our foundation and frames the way we see the world. Our language system "works us over, massages us, and all the more so because of our being unaware of it" (Postman & Weingartner, 1969,

p. 105). Therefore, language is not only used to define our reality, but to create our identity. Because of this, language can be very powerful. It can create community or create separation. It can comfort people or it can harm people. Those responses that discussed the effect that language has had on them emotionally support this view of language. For example, one respondent stated:

> I have felt excluded in a situation where the instructor consistently used male biased terminology. It makes me feel that I don't want to participate in the discussion. That he's not talking to me. That he doesn't want me to be a student in the class.

Unlike the previously mentioned implicit theory of language, this implicit language theory asserts that being conscious of the language does not simply have people become aware of their language use, their consciousness must be raised. Similar to the notion of consciousness-raising stated in the previous chapter, within this approach to language, consciousness-raising is a transformative act. This is due to the foundational nature of language; language does not simply refer to reality, it constitutes reality. Therefore, once people become aware of their creation of reality through language, people will continue to question the relationship between language and reality. Where becoming aware of a sexist word is static, consciousness-raising about the language system is a process. It is a reflexive shift. One instructor asserted that:

> as you make your consciousness-raising habits . . . it continues to happen. I don't think that once you learn consciousness raising, that you can turn it off. It may get dimmed in certain areas. If you don't run into different groups of people, you may learn to not be conscious about their issues if there's not a reflection back to you to say, "But, that really doesn't represent my world."

Of all the respondents, the ones who gave responses in support of the

above view were the ones who were consistent in their belief about the importance of nonsexist language. Therefore, one could conclude that when people see language as having power to create, to shape, or to blemish, they are more likely to attempt to use nonsexist language consistently.

In conclusion, the assumptions about language from the student and instructor discourse revealed that many respondents provided comments that were consistent with the referential view of language. They stated that language is unimportant, silly, and a reflection of society. However, some respondents looked at language as more of a system and provided responses consistent with both the objective systemic and subjective systemic view. A few threads of responses asserted that language is a subjective process but the fitting of responses to the objective processual view could not be determined. The two implicit language theories that the student and instructor discourse seemed to center around were language as a system of signs that we create and use and language as a system of signs, but a constantly changing and evolving system that creates us.

CHAPTER VI

Implications and Recommendations

Implications

The literature that was reviewed for this thesis told me what would likely emerge as tensions of the student and instructor discourse about sexist language. Some of these themes emerged while some did not. Taken as a whole, this data reflects tensions. There are tensions also between groups and within individuals. In the following section, I will review some tensions that emerged from the discourse, the tensions that exist between certain groups, and the tensions within individuals.

Tensions in Everyday Discourse Parallel Tensions in Scholarly Literature

Many tensions and struggles exist over the issue of language reform. Language has been called a symptom and a cause of sexism. Language has been labeled both trivial and significant. Language reform has been accused of infringing on free speech and protecting a civil environment. Language reform has been regarded as a remedy and a camouflage for sexism. Many people believe nonsexist language should be taught only in certain classes while others believe it should be taught across the curriculum. These tensions that emerged from the student and instructor discourse reflect many of the same controversies and struggles that exist in the scholarly literature.

Sexist language is a symptom or a cause. The literature review mentioned two different positions about language change and society: sexist language is a *symptom* of women's oppression or sexist language *causes* women's oppression. Advocates of the first position argue that sexist language is a symptom of sexist practices and that social change creates

language change, not the opposite. Three of the respondents provided comments that were consistent with this view. For example, one instructor claimed that people's views and society change, "then they use a different language to express that." Another instructor stated that although language may reinforce a change in society, just giving something a new name does not alter reality.

Yet, others have argued that instead of passively noting a change in society, it is necessary to change the language to actively effect society. At least two respondents asserted that sexist language may actually cause sexist behavior. One instructor promotes language reform because she states that sexist language excludes half of the population and she wants to change the exclusion in the language and in society.

Language change is trivial or significant. Two positions about the significance of language came through both in the literature and the discourse. As previously mentioned in the literature review, Lakoff (1973) and other scholars have stated that changing the language may be fairly trivial. This opinion also came through with several of the respondents. Six different respondents called language reform silly, unimportant, and/or not a "big deal." Many felt that too much attention to language was a waste of time because language use is just a habit, anyway.

Language as a habit provided one of the top reasons in the data for the difficulty in changing the language. I mentioned previously that the most common objection I have witnessed is that changing our language practices is awkward or difficult. Only one student asserted that using nonsexist language was awkward. He stated he would prefer to use the title of a

position rather than "he" or "she." He will use the plural or both pronouns when he is in a political environment, "but I don't like to use that because to me it doesn't seem, um, quite right." Likely, for him, as well as others, using nonsexist language seems awkward because it is not a habit that he has acquired and is too trivial to acquire as a habit, anyway.

Virtually everyone in today's world was brought up using sexist language. Although we grew up using sexist language and many people consider the use of it a habit, the fact remains that not all people continue to use sexist language today. The people that have chosen to use nonsexist language have likely done so because they feel language reform is important and significant. Scholars on the issue argue that sexist language can not only perpetuate but create sexist behavior and, therefore, should be changed. Moulton, Robinson, and Elias (1978) make a strong claim that "linguistic form can be the cause of sexism as well as the reverse." Several respondents also carried this view. One person that supports language reform stated that "an awareness of the sexist language, an awareness of the fact that . . . they do cause harm . . . is important in changing it."

Language reform infringes on free speech or protects a civil environment. Another objection to language change mentioned previously is that people feel that their rights to free speech are being infringed upon. Only one student explicitly expressed this when he stated that language reform "takes away some of my freedom." Other students addressed this concern when they ridiculed the use of rules for promoting language reform. One student stated "you can't just make a law that no one use it. I think that if he wants to make that a responsibility or a priority of his to educate

students about that [nonsexist language], then, he can make material available to students that want to read it to educate themselves." In other words, the students should be free to decide for themselves.

However, advocates for change do not feel that language reform is an infringement on free speech or actions but that language reform helps protect a civil society. Some respondents stated that nonsexist language sets up an inclusive, respectful, and welcoming environment where sexist language does not. One instructor stated that using gender-biased language in the classroom creates "a very inhospitable climate for female students. They feel, when they hear sexist language, that the instructor is not talking to them and is not including them in the discourse that is going on in the classroom." The same instructor stated further that:

> if one consistently talks about a "chairperson" of the board rather than a "chairman" of the board, eventually, I think it has an influence on people's thinking about the appropriateness of a woman in that role. So, they begin to think that it's normal or natural to be in a role that had been defined previously with a male term.

This whole issue of freedom of speech versus protection of a civil society brings forth the ongoing conversations about political correctness. Many people feel their freedom is being taken away because of the whole "pc" movement while others feel they have been protected due to the "pc" movement. Being politically correct meant different things to the respondents. One instructor asserted that:

> everything we should do, basically should be nonsexist . . . I'm very concerned about the attitudes that we have about . . . people who have stereotypes as it relates gender . . .ethnicity, so that we can be politically correct in everything that we do.

However, one student stated that "some people get upset 'cause everything is

getting 'pc'. . . . I think you can go overboard with being politically correct."

The definition of political correctness is questioned both in everyday discourse and in academia. Burgoon and Bailey (1992) state that because social reality is constituted in and through language, the "pc" movement can work in two ways:

> control in the form of language deconstruction necessary to lay bare ideological bias and oppression (e.g. Lakoff, 1975) and control in the form of the language construction necessary to the emancipation of the oppressed. (p. 100)

Whitney and Wartella (1992) claim that it is unfortunate that the current framing of "pc" has created the impression that "American universities are now adrift in ideological battles and no longer places of academic freedom, tolerance, or justice" (p. 86). It becomes apparent that both the definition of the phrase "politically correct" and the "pc" movement are questioned and challenged.

Language reform can be used to remedy or camouflage sexism. Several empirical studies mentioned in chapter one have lent substantial support for the need for language reform. In addition, many respondents stated that language reform was imperative and that it may remedy sexism. However, the literature about nonsexist language claimed that it can also be used to camouflage sexism. For example, when a speaker uses the term "businessperson" to refer to women and "businessman" to refer to men, the word "person" functions as a euphemism for females. Although no one mentioned this particular aspect of camouflaging sexism, various respondents discussed their discontent with the use of euphemisms.

In addition to camouflaging sexism with euphemisms, sexist statements can be camouflaged by avoiding sexist words. As previously

mentioned, many critics believe that meaning does not reside in a particular word but in the way words work together in discourse. One student stated "I don't think they should change the language, I think they should change the behavior. I just keep seeing the action. I can't see any words. I mean, it's . . . anything degrading, . . . there's just not just one word. . . . there are clusters of words." She further described her experience and stated:

> I don't think it's language. I mean, because a lot of things that happened to me as far as sexism, it really wasn't what they said. It was how they said it. . . . I don't think there should really be any restriction on the language 'cause . . . I found out that the more educated someone gets, the more sneaky they get, you know, and I found out these guys are real sneaky. They covered their butt, because if I wrote it down in a letter it would just sound like, "Oh, that's no big deal," you know? Their language didn't mean anything. It was just a combination of everything.

As Cameron (1985) notes, "in the mouths of sexists, language can always be sexist" (p. 90).

Nonsexist language should be taught only in certain classes or across the curriculum. Although the idea that nonsexist language should only be taught in certain classes did not come up in the literature review, it was mentioned by several respondents. Most students stated that they have received little instruction, if any, in the area of nonsexist language in their college classrooms. The students that had received instruction did so in communication classes and felt that it was most appropriate in that type of class. All but one instructor stated that they do not explicitly teach nonsexist language in their classes. The reasons varied from "we don't write in this class" to "the issue has never come up in my subject matter."

However, one instructor who teaches in more than one department said that she taught nonsexist language alternatives in all of her classes. She

believes that we cannot "talk about the issues we are going to talk about until we talk about the language we're going to use to talk about the issues." Similarly, Postman and Weingartner (1969) believe that language awareness should be taught in every class. They state that because the process of knowing is inseparable from language, language should be regarded as the "mediator in all human perception" and should be used as a unifying focus of all student inquiry (p. 115). Therefore, these authors believe that the meaningful study of language "must be about the relationship of language to reality, whether the 'subject' is history, politics, biology, religion, war, or anything else" (p. 105). Furthermore, Postman and Weingartner (1969) cite Huxley as stating:

> To those who think that liberty is a good thing, and who hope that it may someday become possible for more people to realize more of their desirable potentialities in a society fit for free, fully human individuals to live in, a thorough education in the nature of language, in its uses and abuses, seems indispensable" (p. 125).

Most of the above tensions discussed were mentioned in the literature review. These tensions show that the same controversies and struggles that exist in the literature also were present in the student and instructor discourse.

Differences Between Groups of Respondents

Some emerging patterns and themes showed up more in the discourse of some groups than others. In the results chapter, I identified some interesting concentrations of themes among males and females, students and instructors. In the following section, I will discuss these differences and their implications.

Differences between male and female respondents. Several differences in the themes between males and females became clear after I identified who the respondents were in each cluster. The clusters that revealed differences were language and inclusion/exclusion, the power of authority, affect, respect, the generic "he," humor to draw attention to the language and to ease tension, and language as practical/suitable with the times.

The comments from the cluster about inclusion and exclusion were solely from female respondents, providing eight responses. Six responses from two instructors and two responses from two students discussed how language can be used to include or exclude others and how this is harmful. Most of the respondents discussed their own personal experiences of feeling excluded from the language.

It is possible that the need for inclusion in the language and in general may be more important for females than it is for males. Gilligan (1982) claims that "because this early social environment differs for and is experienced differently by male and female children, basic sex differences recur in personality development" (p. 7). As a result, the feminine personality comes to define itself in terms of relation, connection, and inclusion with others. In a study about power relationships in the classroom, Kramarae and Treichler (1990) found that women were more interested in feeling comfortable and included in the classroom. Men in class, on the other hand, were more interested in "the cognitive and non-personal aspects of interaction" (p. 55).

Gilligan (1982) claims that females see the world as cohering through human connection rather than systems or rules. The idea of a women's life as dependent on connection makes their interest in the inclusion of language

apparent. The fact that they see connection as more meaningful than rules brings one to understand why the traditional rules of language are more easily discarded by females than they are by males. One instructor claimed "I certainly find females, in general, tend to be much more attentive and supportive of language change than I tend to see males."

The power of authority was another cluster in which all of the responses came from females. The responses discussed how the power of authority can affect language use and whether or not that use of power is appropriate. Spender (1985) states that because language is such an influential force in shaping our world, "those who have the power to make the symbols and their meanings are in a privileged and highly advantageous position" (p. 142). Because women have largely played little or no part in producing or maintaining our language system (Spender, 1985), these respondents have probably felt the oppressive nature of language. Therefore, as the discourse suggests, these respondents are less likely to desire a continuation of the authority having power with language. For example, one instructor stated:

> There are people who use extremely sexist language in my presence that I would never think to make any comment about it. I figure I am not going to have any impact. It's going to be a waste of my time and effort. They have more power than I do and I am not stupid.

Nine of the eleven comments in the affect cluster came from females. They each discussed language as having an effect on one's emotions and how it can affect themselves and others in a negative way. Many respondents discussed how sexist language can cause harm and elicit various emotions. One student stated that "in books if you see 'he' . . . throughout the whole book. I get kind of upset when I read stuff like that. Why not 'she'?"

Females have felt the emotional impact of language largely due to the

fact that language has been used disrespectfully against them. Seven of the eight comments in the cluster about language and respect came from females. This cluster was likely addressed by mostly females because women have felt the least respect of the two genders in our society in regard to both the language and behavior.

The comments about using humor to draw attention to the language and to ease tension were given predominantly by women (five of the six comments). They described how they or a female instructor have used humor to draw attention to sexist or nonsexist language and how they use humor in a light-hearted way to ease the tension with their students when the issue of sexist language has been brought up. Because nonsexist language is controversial and people tend to be somewhat resistant to changing sexist language, using humor to defuse the tension may be the approach that tends to work best with resistance. One instructor stated that she will make a joke about sexist language and then "ask students does it matter if I said 'he' or 'she?' Just to call attention to it in a in a light-hearted way."

A very common topic discussed by females in the interviews was the discussion of the generic "he." Twenty comments came from four females and one comment came from one male. Women have been more affected by the use of generics because these terms have made women linguistically invisible. Spender (1985) states that the generics "he" and "man" promote "male imagery in everyday life at the expense of female imagery so that it seems reasonable to assume the world is male until proven otherwise" (p. 156).

The only cluster that was made up mostly of male responses was

language as suitable/practical with the times. Four males provided six comments and a female instructor provided one comment. Most of the responses from this category assert that it is both suitable and practical to change language now because society has changed. Some of the respondents stated that because women are in different positions now, it is appropriate to change the terminology. One instructor commented that "women are starting to be placed in these positions more commonly. . . . it's not uncommon to go the doctor and have it be a she. It's not uncommon to have a CEO of a company to be a woman."

Many respondents seemed to assert that the terminology was accurate in the past for representing reality and now that our reality has changed, it is practical and reasonable to change the language. A student stated that in his own self interest, because he perceives that the situation has changed and society has evolved, he has become more conscious of the gender terms. This argument has some validity when applied to positions of power because they were dominated mostly by men. However, when this argument is applied to generics, it fails. Humanity was never all men. Spender (1985) states that it could be said that out of nowhere we "created the arbitrary and approximate categories of male-as-norm and female as deviant" (p. 142), but it would not be true. I believe another student captured the essence of changing language when he stated that:

> history is interesting how women have developed . . . back in times and even in some cultures today . . . for a woman to assume she had the right to make an issue of this would be ridiculous. But, now it's a lot more of an issue.

Differences between student and instructor respondents. There were fewer differences between students and instructors than there were between

males and females. Because the students and instructors usually differ in their familiarity with theoretical language vocabulary and their ability to conceptualize, I expected a clearer distinction than was the case between students and instructors in regard to their language theory. Some differences did emerge from the data, however, such as the students' view of learning and the issue of rules.

Three students in the cluster about conditioning provided four responses that stated we learn language by being conditioned to use the language. This very behavioristic approach views learning as a fairly simple process. Learning occurs when an individual's behavior results in some behavior from the environment or some reaction within that individual that is reinforcing (Naremore & Hopper, 1990).

Positive reinforcement of behavior increases the probability that behavior will occur again in a similar situation. A student asserted that nonsexist language will be learned "if it's positive reinforcement, if it's something that's implemented gradually. That almost sounds like brainwashing." Her reference to brainwashing seems appropriate and consistent, for behaviorists view the mind as a set of input/output functions foreordained with dispositions to respond in certain ways to certain stimuli (Devitt & Sterelny, 1989). A person is dependent on the actions of others in the environment for his or her learning (Naremore & Hopper, 1990).

This mechanistic view of learning perceives the world in terms of cause-effect, right-wrong, and good-bad. Various developmental models suggest that as people become more sophisticated intellectually they will start to move away from a simplistic dualistic understanding of the world

(Anderson & Ross, 1994). They move toward a pluralistic world view that perceives the world more abstractly and in terms of mutual causation. It is likely that instructors did not share the same view of learning as the students because of their intellectual sophistication.

In addition to learning language by conditioning, students stated that rules should not be used to bring about language reform. As mentioned previously in chapter four, the instructors stated that rules should be used in language reform. Therefore, it seems that the instructors believe that rules prohibiting students from using sexist language will help them acquire the habit of using nonsexist language. The students, on the other hand, felt that such rules were not effective in helping them use nonsexist language.

The Inconsistencies and Contradictions Within Individuals

In addition to the tensions and contradictions in the discourse and between groups, some respondents also had tensions and contradictions within their own discourse. Considering our changing society and the complexity of language, these inconsistencies are not surprising. Beyond some inconsistencies noted previously, I will discuss some inconsistencies about the attribution of power to language in the following section.

We all can agree that language is referential in that we use words to refer to things in order to have shared meaning. Where the disagreement takes place is whether we believe language is only referential. Ellis (1991) states that although we use language to "refer" to the external world and that "this does not mean we must fall into a referential theory of meaning, rather, just that reference is a language practice" (p. 220). While many respondents asserted that language was only referential, a few of their comments

supported the other views of language and meaning.

Although several students stated that attention to language was unimportant, some of their statements would show that they believe otherwise, at least at times. One student stated he felt the word "fireman" included both genders because that was the word he grew up using. However, language reform has presented him with an eternal conflict. Because he still uses the word "fireman," he stated that "I find myself asking myself now is that chauvinistic?" The language makes him question his own self identity. Another student who felt language reform was unimportant, stated "When I say the "chairperson," I'm not differentiating. I am not saying whether that could be a man or a woman. And I think that if everyone started to think like that, I think that it would also become accepted." In contrast to his view that language is petty, in this statement he describes language as having the power to influence thought.

Similarly, one student felt that if the language is getting your point across, it is not necessary to pay much attention to it. She stated that language reform is "nitty-gritty". She does not mind people using masculine generics, yet defined sexist language as "saying 'he' or 'chairman' or 'fireman.'" Later in the interview she asserted that "people know better than to talk to me like that [use sexist language] . . . I'll correct people. I'm a real equality kind of person in everything." In this case, it is likely that she will correct someone if she feels the language used is intentionally sexist.

The complexity of the inconsistencies addressed in these students' multilayered meanings of words could be explained by the notion of polysemy. Anderson and Ross (1994) describe polysemy as "the dependence

of symbolic communication on multiple possible meanings that can arise from an interpretation of oral messages or written text" (p. 76). In other words, any word is open to a multitude of possible meanings. Because no one is the owner of the meaning of a word, "it begins to look harder to blame other people for their intentions in communication, knowing full well that we, in our relation to the others, are partial contributors . . ." (Anderson & Ross, 1994, p. 77).

The above implications discuss the tensions and contradictions within the body of discourse, between different groups of participants, and within individuals. It becomes apparent that people's view of language and meaning is very muddled and undefined and needs to be further studied.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

In the following section, I will discuss the recommendations for future research, many of which reflect some of the limitations of the present study. Finally, I will discuss some recommendations for teachers.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several additional interpretive studies suggest themselves out of this research. Studies similar to the present investigation should be enacted with participants from different instructional settings to determine if the exposure to and experience with nonsexist language affects their opinion and use of nonsexist language. Conducting the research within different disciplines to compare with others also might be beneficial. The disciplinary discourse might reveal how different schools of thought approach language and pedagogy.

In reflecting back, I believe it would have been advantageous to ask

more questions about the relationship between language and reality. If I were conduct the interviews again, I would probe those respondents further who held the view that language shapes our reality and investigate what experiences brought them to that conclusion. I would try to discover if there were any critical incidents either in academic or life experiences that were turning points for them and whether the realization about language was gradual or dramatic.

Because responses in interviews and questionnaires are not always an accurate reflection of people's actions, an ethnographic study in the classroom would be beneficial. As noted in previous chapters, several respondents would pay "lip service" to the importance of using nonsexist language. Yet, they failed to notice the use of sexist language in the scenarios and/or used sexist language themselves during the interview. An ethnographic study that looked at language as it emerged naturally could discover if the interview discourse was the same as their naturally occurring discourse. In addition, an ethnographic study could discover if there is a contradiction between what people say they do (their language about language) and what they do (their language behavior).

Given the fact that gender seemed to have an influence on one's view of the power of language, future research regarding the gender differences in language theory may be beneficial. A closer look at the effects of gender on language use would be warranted considering we all use language to speak to both genders. One could research the male and female perspective about language and the power of authority. Shepherd (1992) states that society has been dominated by a masculine view of communication as control over the

physical and social environment. The feminine view of communication as relational responsibility has been oppressed. These opposing views of communication may, in fact, influence one's view of language in general, and sexist language in particular. In addition, one could explore the differences in sexist language and humor between males and females. Researchers could investigate why females use humor about sexist language and males use sexist language as humor.

Earlier speculation has raised some interesting questions regarding the reasons for student resistance to language reform. Further investigation should collect and explore resistance incidents in order to discover the rationale for such resistance. Various methods could be used for collection of the data. For example, a researcher could observe classes where controversy and resistance is likely to occur or collect recall data about specific experiences with resistance from both students and instructors.

The effectiveness of using rules to promote language reform should be further explored. As previously mentioned, the University of Maine adopted a policy that states that "all university communications, whether delivered orally or in writing, shall be free of sexist language" (Peterson, 1992, p. 2). Students enrolled in classes from that university could be interviewed or observed and compared to students from another university that has no such policy.

Although this research had only twelve respondents, the data was rich and abundant due to the lengthy interviews. Yet, because of the limited sample size, the results of this study cannot be generalized. Scholars should use methodological aspects of the positivistic approach to test the causal

relationship between one's implicit language theory and sexist language either with a questionnaire or by conducting experiments. Having identified that everyone has an implicit theory of language, it would be advantageous to create a questionnaire that asked a large sample of students and/or instructors questions about nonsexist language and language theory. The questionnaire could have questions that support each of the different language theories. For example, questions about the referential approach may ask if meaning is in the words or meaning is in people. One could match a person with a certain language theory and then look at their approach to nonsexist language. The questionnaire could also be used to correlate these language theories with a variety of different demographic variables, such as age, education, gender, and ethnicity.

In addition to questionnaires, various experimental studies in controlled settings could be conducted to further investigate methods used in language reform. For example, an experiment could be created where an instructor teaches nonsexist language a certain way to one group of students and not to the other group of students, serving as the control group. A pre-test/post-test design could be used to measure the relationship between language theories and resistance, use of sexist language, or learning styles.

Finally, a number of action research projects or case studies of language reform need to be conducted. For instance, someone who promotes language reform could conduct a series of case studies exploring the different ways to overcome resistance with highly resistant groups. After all, the intellectual understanding of these issues needs to be brought into the classroom and studied as lived experience.

Any of these lines of research could also explore how people's implicit language theory affects their actions. This question could be asked with different groups of people in various contexts. Particularly in the classroom, those teaching language reform may be presented with obstacles due to the different language theories people have. If one's view of language affects one's view of meaning, difficulty in shared meaning is inevitable.

Implications for Teachers

The fact that all teachers use language to teach makes attention to language use a necessity. Whether or not teachers choose to act as social change agents or participate in the movement for language reform, the use of sexist language will inevitably become an issue in their class at some point in time. The decision instructors must make is whether to be proactive or reactive. Because everyone has an implicit language theory and an opinion about sexist language, this research has several implications for all teachers.

Resistance to language reform is prevalent and the reasons for resistance are still not fully understood. Understanding student's implicit language theory can bring some of the reasons for resistance to the forefront. Due to the limited number of studies about lived experience in the classroom and language reform, it is imperative for instructors to observe and explore "what works" and why. Instructors may want to help students understand the underlying theories that they maintain about changing (or not changing) language. Once a person's view of nonsexist language and their implicit language theory has been identified, accommodating people with different views and theories might be possible.

It is important for teachers to understand the issue of consciousness-

raising in order to discover what works best for students in examining their own meaning-making. Consciousness-raising can aid in the process of students learning how to learn. Because consciousness-raising is more far reaching and broadly based, it may work more effectively than other methods. If consciousness-raising about language creates a reflexive shift in student thinking, they may become reflexive about other important issues in life. Therefore, teachers are going to have to move a step beyond simply trying to make their students more aware of their words.

In addition to "what works" in teaching language reform, the issue of "what's appropriate" in teaching language reform deserves mention. The instructors in this study discussed very little about the appropriateness of language reform. The absence of this is worth noting. There seems to be some general agreement among the instructors that they would like language to be less sexist. Yet, they failed to mentioned the ethics or appropriateness of language reform. Their questions were more about whether or not language reform was appropriate in their own class rather than about whether it is appropriate at all. None of them seemed to make a moral judgment about students' rights, students' freedom of speech, or their own possible misuse of power in controlling the students' use of language.

Teachers should be aware of all the objections to language reform and if they choose to teach it, they should have a strong philosophical grounding on what is appropriate and why. It is important to recognize that it is very difficult for most students to change their language because language is closely linked to one's identity. We must realize the tremendous power the structure of a habitual language can have. Asking students to change their

language is not purely a cognitive thing; it can shake their world. Therefore, it is necessary to be both understanding and supportive.

The findings from the student and instructor discourse about pedagogy in chapter four are very important in discussing what is appropriate in the classroom. Both students and instructors seemed to agree generally that education is needed about language reform, language is a habit that can be broken, and modeling nonsexist language is appropriate. Many of the respondents felt that correcting sexist language was also appropriate. There was very little, if any, resistance to these ways of promoting language reform. The resistance to language reform centered around the use of rules. One could conclude that promoting language reform would be more accepted and effective if it was done without the use of rules. Instead of demanding the use of nonsexist language, a teacher could use discussion and other collaborative approaches. One could offer guidelines and alternatives to using nonsexist language and could discuss the issue of language change. How do we change our language habits? What words do you no longer use and why? How did you learn to use different words?

The use of language in the classroom must be viewed by the students as a matter of choice rather than a requirement for a grade. For example, instead of stating "In this class, you will use only nonsexist language. If you use sexist language points will be taken off" one could say "As we have discussed, language can have an effect on people. It is preferred that you choose your words wisely and conscientiously so that you avoid misinterpretation and do not offend others in the class." Students should not feel controlled or as if they had been apprehended.

The major obstacles to language reform, in my opinion, are not resistance to language change, opposition to the "pc" movement, or sexism, but ignorance and lack of education. The ultimate question is not "whose terminology is going to win out?" but rather "will the interdependence of thought and language ever be recognized?" Miller and Swift (1976) believe that "the most far-reaching revolutions have been inspired by nothing more (or less) than seeing the obvious from a new perspective" (p. 135). We no longer see the earth as the center of the universe; there is hope that we should some day not see man as the center of our language.

Because language screens our reality as a filter on a camera lens screens light waves (Miller & Swift, 1976), it is time we clean our screens. Screens can distort, disfigure, and damage our perception. We fail to notice a dirty screen unless it is taken off and examined. By examining our screens, we will have shaken the screen so that looking through it will never be the same again.

Since language is such a fundamental screen, it becomes necessary for education and consciousness-raising to bring forth essential changes in language and thought. All people have a theory of language that provides order to our everyday experiences of the world. Unfortunately, most people are unaware of their assumptions about language. Maynard (1970) contends that because we swim in an ocean of language, each of us has a perpetual self-inventory job of premise evaluation. "We must bring our assumed premises out into the open—up to the surface—where they can be examined by ourselves and the world" (p. 136). As mentioned previously, if language not only reflects but helps maintain society, "changing the usage and structure of language constitutes at least a first step toward changing societal

practices" (Blaubergs, 1978, p. 245).

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

Situation #1

Pat is giving an oral report in class and states the following: "Mankind will slowly die off if we continue to destroy our environment."

1. What is your response to this statement?

Situation #2

In a medicine class a student and instructor engage in dialogue:

Student: A doctor should be tested to be sure he has not contracted the AIDS virus.

Instructor: So do you believe that he or she should be tested annually?

Student: Yes, he should be tested at least annually.

Instructor: So, you think only the male doctors should be tested?

2. How to you react to this dialogue?

Situation #3

At the University of Maine, the Department of Communication prescribes that students in G.E. courses should use only nonsexist language and publishes a brochure which provides a brief history of sexist language and gives examples of both sexist language and nonsexist alternatives.

3. What is your view on this?

Questions Asked to the Students

4. As a student, what do you believe the instructor's role should be in

implementing language change efforts?

5. Have you ever taken a course where the instructor insisted on the students using nonsexist language? If not, what if one did?

   A. If so, what did they do?

   B. How did you feel about it?

   C. Did you use nonsexist language in the class? Out of the class? Why or why not?

   D. What were the other students' reactions to this? Did any resist?

6. Have you ever had an instructor who used sexist language?

   A. If so, what language did the instructor use?

   B. Did it offend you?

   C. Did it offend other students?

   D. If no, hypothetically how do you think you would react if they did?

7. When speaking and writing, do you try to use the prescribed language changes such as he/she, chairperson, etc.? Why or why not?

8. How would you define sexist language?

9. Has sexist language ever affected you?

   If so, how?

10. Can language reform change people's views? People's behavior? society?

Questions Asked to the Instructors

4. As an instructor, what do you believe your role should be in implementing language change efforts?

A. Why?

5. Do you model nonsexist language in the class?

   A. What has the students reaction to this been?

6. Do you ever discuss the issue of language reform in class?

   A. If so, what has the students' reactions been to this?

7. Do you give students guidelines to use nonsexist language and prescribe them to use in class when writing and speaking?

8. How would you define sexist language?

9. Has sexist language ever affected you?

   If so, how?

10. Can language reform change people's views? People's behavior? society?